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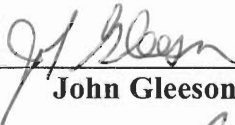
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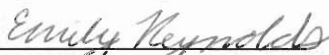
MERTON UDP:
BEST VALUE CONSULTATION PROJECT

An Interactive Qualifying Project Report
submitted to the Faculty
of the
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science.

by


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- 1. Consultation
- 2. Planning
- 3. Best Value


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ABSTRACT

In this project we provided a review of the planning consultation process in the London Borough of Merton. Our review consisted of post surveys and phone interviews involving respondents to previous consultations. We conducted a comparative analysis of responses and assessed the implementation of Best Value in consultations. The outcome of our study determined which methods would improve public participation, provided a strategy for incorporating Best Value into future consultations, and established the preferences residents have for feedback and consultation methods.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

London is a widespread and highly populated city. As a result, town planning and the incorporation of public concern are critical to the maintenance of the city. To achieve these objectives the city of London is divided into locally governing boroughs. Merton is one of these boroughs. Each borough is required by legislation to devise a planning process that will revitalise the future community. This plan is called the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The UDP is created after consulting with the public on their views and ideas for planning. Once completed, the plan is effective for ten consecutive years. The primary purpose of the UDP is “to provide guidance as to how changes to the borough's physical environment should be directed and controlled, in the interests of meeting the needs of its residents” (Merton, UDP, V).

In the creation of the UDP, the local government is required to follow several national policies. Recently the local governing policy was modified to improve the quality of services in all areas of government. The former policy was Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). This plan required competition to achieve low costs. However, local government sought to incorporate more public participation and feedback in planning. To accomplish these goals, the national government has adopted a set of guidelines known as “Best Value.” This policy is integrated into the planning process to ensure efficient, effective, and economically stable communities. With the implementation of Best Value legislation, Borough Councils are required to incorporate residents’ views into their UDP’s. The guidelines set forth through Best Value legislation express the need to obtain minority opinions and consider diversity. This will help to ensure the needs of every community member are met.

Our job was to review the consultation process to determine which methods would improve public participation. We also determined the concerns and recommendations that residents have for planning consultations in Merton. For future consultations we offered ideas on how to incorporate Best Value practices. We attained these goals by reviewing previous consultations and documents on borough planning, and conducting our own consultations.

Our first step was to gain a complete understanding of the planning process in Merton. This involved examining such documents as previously published notes from the Department of Environment and Transport Regions (DETR), which outline Best Value indicators and other information that details the planning process. Face to face interviews were another tool we used to gain a better understanding of Best Value and planning in Merton.

We interviewed officials on Merton's Council, Best Value authorities, and planning officials. These interviews investigated the principles of Best Value, borough planning, and the methods of consultation that are already used in Merton. Compiling the results from these interviews provided insight into the planning processes in Merton.

With the information acquired through our research, we designed and conducted postal surveys and phone interviews that investigated the use of Best Value policy in the consultation process. These interviews and surveys focused on individuals who previously expressed an interest in local government by participating in the consultation entitled "Towards Merton in 2011." The phone interviews and postal survey helped us to assess effective types of consultation practices. The survey and interviews also

questioned participants on how they felt Merton Council was handling their responses and views.

In the second week of our study we posted 168 surveys to respondents that we randomly chose from the 321 respondents of the survey entitled “Towards Merton in 2011.” Out of these 168, we received 98 surveys back. With the remaining 153 respondents, we attempted to conduct phone interviews. From the sample of 153, only 111 were potential participants for our interview, due to a lack of contact information. We successfully conducted 28 phone interviews.

We compiled the results of these responses into various spreadsheets and graphs to find the common requests of the residents. Overall, these people wanted more consultations on local issues from Merton Council. They also suggested having more specific feedback through newspapers and postal pamphlets. Respondents felt Merton Council had a low understanding of their needs in planning and favoured post surveys and letters as methods for future consultation.

Our team offered suggestions to Merton Council on how to increase their future public participation. The residents expressed their interest in the planning process for the Borough, but felt they did not receive feedback from their previous participation. Residents also stated that Merton Council did not provide for direct communication with the residents. To relieve these concerns, participants suggested having more information obtainable through local newspapers, postal letters, and libraries. We recommended the borough improve those methods of communication, particularly the local Merton Messenger newspaper. Improving the channel of communication will hopefully reach a large number of residents.

There were many written comments suggesting more direct contact with planning officials in Merton Council. They felt their questions were not addressed because they could not ask informed members of the council. As a result of the comments, we included recommendations to conduct more regular meetings with councillors present. We also recommended having local meetings when residents are concerned about specific issues in their area of residence. Discussion groups would provide a better format for addressing local concerns. Because residents already displayed an apprehension towards participation, creating an informal atmosphere would encourage more residents to attend local meetings.

We suggested postal surveys as a method for future consultations based on the acceptable 58% response rate from our postal survey, and residents' comments. The written comments also indicated that many respondents would like to receive more planning information through postal pamphlets. We felt Merton Council should post newsletters on a regular basis to inform residents of council meetings and policies. Also, ongoing contact with residents' associations in the future may help to involve residents and keep more people informed and interested.

The goal of Best Value is to incorporate residents' views and offer the highest quality of services. This was the underlying theme of our recommendations. Based on the results of our phone interviews and postal surveys, postal surveys are the more effective and efficient method of consultation. We received a response rate of less than 30% on our phone interviews, whereas our postal survey response rate was 58%. A large amount of information can be gathered in several weeks through the use of the post.

The newspapers and libraries are also efficient and economical. Many people read the local newspapers, and use the libraries as sources of planning information. Only a limited number of copies are needed in the library, making this method very economical. As far as Best Value Indicators are concerned, response rate is a major indicator in the success of a consultation. Our response rate was acceptable, so we recommended the use of similar methods in the future for successful consultations. Upon the completion of this project, we also made some recommendations for further research on the topic of consultation practices. Our study was limited to the respondents of a previous survey, so we were not able to focus on any particular group of people in Merton. We suggested Merton could do a study looking in depth at each ward in the borough separately. We tried to obtain responses from as many minority groups as possible, but our list was too small and not diverse enough. We were not able to relay any recommendations to Merton with specific regard to effective consultation practices for different groups of people, or different wards.

Through the comments we received, we realised that citizens are not as interested in general aspects of planning, but are extremely interested when the planning issue directly affects them or their family. For this reason, we suggested that Merton use purposive sampling. Purposive sampling would enable Merton to key in on one or more groups and ask detailed, specific questions in the consultations. Vague consultations were a major complaint from the citizens of Merton and this would be an easy and effective method of correction.

Along with research on consultation practices, further research on Best Value is necessary. Best Value seeks to provide a satisfactory balance between cost and quality of

services, but many respondents replied with the obvious answer that they would want the highest quality at the lowest cost. We felt the issues of cost and quality inspired many written comments, and therefore required a deeper investigation.

Overall, we gathered a large amount of valuable data and were able to conduct some useful comparative analysis. However, due to time constraints there were areas we only began to look at. We hope that by providing Merton with our analysis and recommendations, we will enable them to do further research and improve their consultation process in accordance with Best Value.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to start off by thanking Steve Cardis and the Planning Policy and Information Team. These people provided us with valuable information for our project, and the means with which to accomplish our study. We appreciated their patience and assistance throughout the project. They made our experience in Merton enjoyable and convenient. We would also like to thank the Borough of Merton for allowing us to use their facilities, and we hope the results of this study are useful in their future. The residents and community groups of Merton have provided us with the information for our analysis and recommendations, so we would like to extend a word of thanks to them as well.

Furthermore, we would like to thank our advisors, Professors Joel J. Brattin and Holly K. Ault, and our social science professor, Professor Wes Jamison, for their assistance with designing and conducting our project.

Finally, we would like to thank WPI, our families, and those in the IGSD Department, for allowing us to have this great opportunity to live and work in London for seven weeks to complete this study. This project provided us with an invaluable experience we would not have received at any other college or university.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The city of London is diverse in ethnicity and age. Since London has a large and widespread population, the city is divided into locally governing boroughs. Merton is one of these boroughs. The Borough of Merton has approximately 170,000 people. For the improvement and maintenance of their community, Merton has devised a process to revitalise the future community. The plan is called the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The primary purpose of the UDP is “to provide guidance as to how changes to the borough's physical environment should be directed and controlled, in the interests of meeting the needs of its residents” (Merton, UDP, V).

The plan focuses on five main topics that encompass the major concerns of the borough. An overview of the entire plan is discussed in the section entitled “A Vision for Merton.” This topic deals with preparing Merton as it enters the twenty-first century. The UDP then examines “Living and Working in Merton.” This section of the plan explains housing policies, industrial development, affordable housing, education, and other information pertaining to residential and industrial planning. “Merton as a Safe, Green, and Healthy Borough” plans for the development of parks and recreation areas, conservation of land, pollution, and other environmental concerns. The UDP also looks into the topic of “Transportation.” Transportation is a key issue in the borough's planning. Improvement of public transportation systems in an effort to decrease personal transportation is another important step in planning for the Borough. Decreasing traffic and making it easier to travel through Merton are two integral changes for the future. The main theme of “Town Centres and Shopping” is the revitalisation of town centres.

Merton Council hopes to improve the appearance of their town centres in order to promote business and tourism.

In the planning process the local government is required to follow several national policies. Recently the local governing policy was modified to improve quality in every aspect of government. The former planning policy was Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). This plan lacked adequate public participation and feedback. In order to address the concerns that CCT was unsuccessful in accomplishing, the national government has adopted a set of guidelines known as “Best Value.” Under the new Best Value legislation, Borough Councils are required to seek the opinions of their residents. This policy is integrated into the planning process to ensure efficient, effective, and economically stable communities. For the Council to meet the needs of community members, Best Value must also consider the diversity in the community.

Obtaining an accurate representation involves an understanding and analysis of Equal Opportunity. Incorporation of the recent Best Value legislation and Equal Opportunity policies into their UDP consultation process is Merton’s next step in the planning process. Realising the importance of feedback from the residents of Merton, the Council of Merton has developed a series of questionnaires and public meetings called consultations. From the questionnaires they have kept a record of responses concerning issues mentioned in the UDP.

Our job was to determine which methods would improve public participation. We also established the priorities that residents have for planning in Merton, and reviewed the consultation process to ensure that Best Value practices were being implemented. We

also examined previous consultations on borough planning, and conducted our own consultations.

To gain a complete understanding of the planning process in Merton, we examined previously published notes from the Department of Environment and Transport Regions (DETR) that outlined Best Value indicators and other information that detailed the planning process. Face to face interviews with local Best Value and planning officials also provided us with useful background knowledge. With the information acquired through our research, we designed and conducted postal surveys and phone interviews that investigated the use of Best Value policy in the consultation process. These helped us to assess effective types of consultation practices. The survey and interviews also questioned participants on how they felt Merton Council is handling their responses and views.

We conducted the post survey and phone interviews with respondents to the 1998 questionnaire "Towards Merton in 2011." Through examining previous consultation processes and noting areas that could be improved, we recommended the most effective methods for obtaining the public's opinion.

This report will enable Merton to implement Best Value and provide a strategy to increase public participation in their future planning processes. The final project reflects the opinions of the people living and working in Merton, and will aid Merton in successfully designing future consultation practices.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Urban Development

Urban development is the comprehensive planning procedure for constructing and preserving a city. Development includes such categories as housing, the workplace, transportation, and parks and recreation. To understand the methods used in urban planning, it is important to explain each section's key points.

Housing is an essential part of any urban planning. High-density housing is quite effective in building a community and is highly encouraged, especially near town centres, commercial centres, and near public transportation facilities (Ewing, 28). Cost effective building is a key to affordable housing in any town. Affordable housing enables mixed class neighbourhoods to be formed. The initial formation of neighbourhoods is a crucial part of planning. The clustering of houses helps to preserve the surrounding environment.

The workplace, in relation to where workers live, is an issue often overlooked in planning (Strong, 239). The ideal situation is to develop diverse neighbourhoods. This is appropriate with the realisation that most lower class residents work in the suburbs but live close to town centres. This hinders diversity because residents that have an added expense of travel are less likely to afford the suburban housing. According to Strong, it is more conducive to make affordable housing near the work place (239). This would also affect the transportation matters involved in planning.

A decrease in traffic congestion and an increase in public transportation are two issues of relevance in urban planning. Public transportation is also intrinsic in the planning of housing. If transportation is not easily accessible then people will not use it.

Most public transportation is based around the downtown area. The downtown area is the centre for major business; therefore being able to move around efficiently is vital to many of the workers in the area. Most planning tries to develop this area as much as possible in order to allow ample space for parks and recreational areas.

Parks and recreation areas are important to residents, and are therefore an essential part of towns and cities (Merton, Consultation). According to Strong it is imperative to separate the industrial town centres from environmental areas to preserve the natural beauty of the landscape (261). However, urban intensification in town centres can contribute to pollution of the environment. One solution to this destruction of the environment is to build in areas that have already been constructed upon. In addition to industry, the location of housing also affects transportation and the environment.

Urban planning in Merton involves a carefully designed process of creating and reviewing a Unitary Development Plan, a written guideline for all future borough planning. The methods that individuals can use to voice objections to the UDP are outlined in the DETR's Development Plans booklet. This booklet explains how the objection process functions as a set of written and vocal communications between the public and the officials who wrote the UDP. Urban planning is a carefully structured process that is essential for Merton's future.

2.2 Sustainable Development

The goal of town planning is to maintain sustainable development. According to the Brundtland Report, sustainable development means “meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own

needs” (Merton, UDP, 134). Merton Council feels that sustainable development is necessary in their UDP, and integral to Best Value planning. In an effort to maintain sustainability, Maser says that one must consider the future when zoning land (Maser, 8). Sustainable development is a continual process that must be implemented at the local level (Maser, 96). Procedures for sustainability must be updated on a regular basis to ensure the demands of future generations (Maser, 56).

Sustainability is dependent on urban form, the infrastructure and design of a city (Williams, 167). The preferred urban form for sustainability is of high density and mixed use. This urban form is known commonly as “the compact city” (Williams, 56). However, Williams argues that higher densities of population may not be bringing about the benefits suggested by those supporting the compact city (169). Some of the people living in these areas have made it clear that the creation of the compact city has had a harmful impact on their lives (Williams, 169). Urban intensification is the idea that creating a population of higher density results in a more economic city. Furthermore, to argue against urban intensification, Williams claims that “the relationship between high densities and economic benefits is yet to be proven—it is almost impossible to unravel the relationship between economic performance and urban form” (172).

Another important question under this topic is whether or not the environment will be able to support a high quality of life. In a universe of constant change, maintaining the environment is a difficult goal to achieve (Maser, 13). Sustainable development is clearly a topic of considerable debate and importance.

2.3 UDP Deposit Draft

The UDP Deposit Draft is a strategy for developing and maintaining high quality public services in Merton over the next ten years. This is a working draft of the UDP. The UDP contains sections dealing with living and working in Merton, the environment of Merton, transportation in the borough, and commercial centres. To address housing issues, Merton plans to develop mixed-use communities with housing close to shopping and places of work (Merton, UDP, 50). Affordable housing and housing for elderly people will also be developed in appropriate locations (Merton, UDP, 64, 68). The writers of the UDP want to preserve the parks and any undeveloped areas in an effort to maintain the natural environment. Green chains will be used to link the open areas to provide continuous trails for exercise (Merton, UDP, 107). Development will begin in locations that have previously been developed. To decrease traffic problems, Merton officials want to integrate and improve access to public transportation (Merton, UDP, 230). In addition to public transportation, the borough also wants to promote travel by bicycle and foot to decrease pollution from automobiles. The officials also discuss parking policies to accommodate new developments, traffic, and convenience for the residents.

The UDP is the basis for all borough planning in Merton. Understanding the foundations of planning and the range of services covered by the UDP, we will generate more relevant recommendations to Merton on the consultation process. The UDP affects everyone living and working in Merton. Therefore, it is essential that we understand the document and how the policies impact the lives of those residents living in Merton. Having knowledge about the UDP will aid us in being able to offer recommendations on

how to improve the residents' participation and understanding in the planning of future UDPs. Businesses, individuals, and workers are all included in this planning framework. Our goal is to recommend methods that can be used to help all residents in understanding and participating in the formation of the UDP.

2.4 Consultation

The public consultation is a means of assessing public opinion through various methods including surveys, interviews, focus groups, and public forums. The consultation notes used for our project are based on a questionnaire. We obtained statistical information and comments from the Merton Council Unitary Development Plan- Deposit Draft- Statement of Publicity and Consultation. This document is a reflection of the opinions of the people concerning the quality of life in the borough. The purpose of the notes is to inform interested individuals of the consultation process of Merton's Unitary Development Plan. The notes provide a qualitative and quantitative breakdown of the response.

The questionnaires were placed in public libraries and the Merton Civic Centre, and were also sent to community groups in Merton. The borough attempted to contact those individuals who were not generally represented in Merton. Numerous copies of the questionnaire were also placed in frequented locations. The consultation process was based on a number of techniques advocated by the local government. One important technique was to concentrate on one main idea. In this consultation, the main goal was to address the topics of concern in the review of the UDP.

According to the consultation notes, there were 3000 questionnaires distributed, and 321 people responded. Of the respondents, 75% were white, 12% were ethnic minorities, and 13% did not give an ethnic origin. Because the total minority population in Merton is only 16%, a 12% response rate from ethnic minorities is a roughly proportionate response. There were 67 responses from representatives of community organisations. These varied from housing groups to environmental groups, planning consultants, and elderly groups.

This consultation represented a response rate of just over 10%. In order to extract useful statistical conclusions from survey data, a 50% response rate is necessary. This is to ensure results reflect the ideas of at least half of the surveyed individuals.

The above response rate percentage is a result of self-selection bias. Self-selection bias originates from the distribution method for the questionnaire. Since the questionnaire was not circulated to randomly selected citizens, individuals who initiated their own participation determined the responses. This creates results that cannot be statistically analysed. However, the surveys received were useful in supplying Merton with feedback and opinions.

The first topic in the questionnaire was “A Vision of Merton in 2011.” The results of the questions in this section were that 77% of the people supported a plan to protect the natural and built environment. Some general statements made by those answering the questionnaire encouraged investing in the poorer areas of Merton. They also support mixed-use neighbourhoods for most areas. Merton Council generally agreed with all the comments found in the consultation notes.

The second topic of the consultation was based on “Merton as a Place to Live and Work.” Housing density has always been an issue in Merton and the Greater London area. According to the questionnaire, over half of the respondents disagreed with the plan to increase housing density. People feared that high-density housing would bring a lack of privacy, as well as a loss of light due to shadows from high rises.

Although residents fear high density housing, they still see the need for businesses. There was agreement concerning the addition of business in residential areas with the stipulation that new problems such as increased traffic did not arise. Merton respondents felt it was important to continue a business relationship with London, to provide local employment.

The third topic investigated in the questionnaire was "Merton as a Safe Green Borough." Seventy-three percent of the respondents encouraged changes in the waste treatment and recycling facilities in Merton, and 72% supported higher environmental standards for new developments outside conservation areas. Overall comments reflected the respondents' concern with preserving parks and wildlife throughout the borough.

“Merton’s Town Centres” was the fourth topic in the questionnaire. The respondents strongly supported changing the use of empty shops in town centres. Several respondents suggested using the empty shops as residential property. The respondents also made a point of discouraging the addition of pubs to the town centres. The addition of night-time activities was suggested but basing them around pubs was discouraged. Respondents also encouraged improving the transport interchange facilities in town centres.

The fifth and final section of the consultation concerns transportation, especially public transportation. Overall, the respondents were in favour of public transportation. People would like fewer cars on the road, and a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Although the respondents encouraged the development of public transportation, they questioned exactly how it would be developed. This scepticism may cause problems when final plans are released. Some respondents questioned the effect on the borough's natural surroundings and the alteration of facilities that were still usable (Merton, Consultation).

The Merton questionnaire provides a list of respondents who are concerned with planning in Merton. By providing Merton with their thoughts and ideas on planning, they will allow us to focus our survey on individuals who are involved and interested in planning.

2.5 Compulsory Competitive Tendering

The recent legislation of Best Value has replaced Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) as the nationally recognised regulatory policy. CCT was established in 1979 as a government policy that focused on competition as a method to increase and improve public services to the community (Cullingworth, 61). The evolution of CCT was a result of the public's dissatisfaction with government services. The lack of government regulation in inner city landholdings and the wasteful tiers of a metropolitan government resulted in an overall displeasure with government services. As a consequence, CCT was developed with an emphasis on privatisation and competition. CCT also emphasised a reduction in the public's participation in town planning to make the process simpler and

faster. The motto of CCT was value for money, and CCT policy provided consumers with a broad range of choices for suppliers (Cullingworth, 61).

CCT provided for competition, but failed to address methods for quality implementation in the delivery of public services. One of the drawbacks of CCT is that because of the huge emphasis on the lowest cost to the consumer, the local authority cannot always compete with the private sector when bidding for town services. Since CCT is only concerned with low cost, the local government and community can lose control over the choice of supplier in these competition wars. For example, a private company might bid lower on a construction job, to ensure employment, but in reality might be unable to maintain that low cost and fail to deliver high quality work. With CCT, the government was forced to accept the lowest bidder. CCT only considers cost without consumer input, and therefore, the process of selecting town service providers may not truly be value for money (Jones, 74). The focus of CCT exclusively considers the cost and standards of services, and has led to antagonism between public sector service providers and the local government (DETR, Modernising, 6).

One of the main changes from CCT to Best Value involved even further increasing the quality and value of town services by creating Best Value policies to oversee government planning. Another change involved heightening the role of the consumer through consultation processes (Jones, 180).

2.6 Best Value

Best Value is a recently developed document of legislation for urban planning. The Local Government Bill of 1998 defines Best Value in the context of securing a continuous improvement in all government services (Planning Officers, 4). Before Best

Value, there was a discrepancy between delivery of services by government, and the actual quality of services desired. Best Value seeks to meet the needs of the public, not only at a low cost, but also with high quality service. As an improvement in planning policy, the purpose of Best Value is to provide a flexible framework for town planning (DETR, Modernising, 5). This framework should emphasise service quality while ensuring competition and efficiency (DETR, 5). Through the combination of efficiency, effectiveness, and economy, local governments seek to improve the quality of service they provide to the community.

Best Value was initially developed with the 12 Principles of Best Value, a government document that was sent to all British authorities in June 1997 (DETR, 5). This report outlined the key elements of Best Value. These included competition as an important management tool, the crucial duty that local authorities have in implementing Best Value, and the need for continuous assessment of quality services that the government provides (Crawley, 2).

From August 1997 through April 1998, the National Development Planning Service (DPS) implemented Best Value pilot programmes in Greater London. The DPS of the City of Westminster became one of four pilot programmes. The city conducted pilot programmes in an effort to understand the effectiveness of Best Value as a functional town planning policy (Environment, 1). The Best Value pilot sought to apply many of the Best Value principles, including the balance of cost and quality of service, the maintenance of competition, and the accessibility of services (Crawley, 2). After the pilot programme, the DPS in the city of Westminster used a consultation process (surveys) to determine attitudes toward the services the city council was providing. They

targeted 380 service users, including businesses, residents, agents, and councillors. The pilot study revealed that the DPS in Westminster was providing better services after the implementation of Best Value. Participants in the survey also responded positively to the DPS services when compared to other local authority departments (Environment, 4).

After the favourable results of the pilot program, local officials further developed Best Value. On 24 November 1998, the Queen gave a speech to the national government confirming Best Value as the new planning policy of England (Environment, 2).

Because Best Value is a relatively new town planning approach, long-term implications of the plan have not yet been examined. Some of the difficulties that might be expected in Best Value are gaining the public's trust and participation in government planning, establishing a clearly defined means of measuring the success of the plan, and comparing the costs (Policy, 9). Another issue hindering the implementation of Best Value is the difficulty in breaking down the planning process. Still other problem areas involve the maintenance of both competition and continuity, and obtaining public involvement while accounting for conflicts of interest (ALPBO, 3). In the time period since the first four pilot programmes, England has conducted 38 more Best Value pilot projects (DETR, Local, 26). These projects addressed many of the above issues, and used various methods of measuring Best Value. A number of the regions with pilots set targets for future improvements in services.

The implementation of Best Value on national and local levels will involve a 22-step planning process. The main parts to these steps are for the local government to assess their strengths and weaknesses, inform other members within government, prepare a performance plan, and create guidelines for reviews (Planning, 8). Once these steps

have been established, it is necessary for the government to carry out pilot reviews, establish a consultation strategy, have systems of support, and develop the government officials' expertise. The guidelines for review were defined by considering the opinions of the public as demonstrated through the data from public meetings, questionnaires, and surveys.

Merton's goal is to begin the process to adopt Best Value to improve governmental services early in the year 2000. The application of Best Value in Merton involves a corporate review, an established five-year programme of review services, and a published Local Performance Plan (Merton, Consultation, 2). The Merton Best Value framework involves eight stages. The eight stages emphasise a management team that reviews Best Value practices in government, the establishment of a baseline review of services through consultation practices, and subsequent reviews and reports.

The Best Value framework outlines the necessity to train local officials in Best Value practices. Intrinsic to Merton's Best Value plan are the four C's. These define the review process, in an effort to consider public concerns and improve services. The four C's stand for Challenge, which addresses the underlying purpose of the review, Compare, which examines other local authorities, Consult, and Competition (Policy, 9).

The assessment of Best Value Practices will allow for comparison indicators. The comparison indicators are included in the UDP and ensure that the plan delivers equality and a sustainable future (ALPBO, 5). To assess Best Value practices, government officials will create benchmarking clubs, which design comparison indicators, and a checklist of best value performance (ALPBO, 5).

The national government institutes Best Value as a mandatory practice on 1 April 2000. After this date, local governments are expected to achieve a 2% per annum efficiency improvement (Policy, 9).

2.7 Equal Opportunity

To receive an accurate representation of the public's views, it is important to obtain a diverse response from all minority groups. Equal opportunity can be described as a "necessary condition for fair or just competition" (Bowie, 3). The distribution of the questionnaire in Merton regarding the UDP review was targeted toward those groups who did not ordinarily receive representation. The questionnaire was purposely sent to groups of ethnic minorities, elderly groups, and younger aged groups. The questionnaires were also placed in common areas where a wide variety of people would be able to participate and fill out a survey (Merton, Consultation). By targeting underrepresented groups, the council may have increased the participation of people who would normally not have participated at all. An understanding of how to apply equal opportunity practices is important to the council in their future review of the UDP.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

To assess the residents' views on Merton's ability to address citizen participation in the planning process, we contacted individuals who have displayed a prior interest in planning. We identified participants, through purposive sampling, that responded to the Merton planning questionnaire entitled "Towards Merton in 2011" as potential candidates for our research. Purposive sampling is a social science sampling strategy that allows us to research certain people or groups with specific attributes (Berg, 229). The basis for purposive sampling in our case was the inclination to participate in government.

3.1 Background Research

3.1.1 Document Analysis

We reviewed recently published reports from Merton Council and the DETR to aid us in our understanding of planning and Best Value. This allowed us to create a study directed toward specific issues relevant to planning and evaluate our results in the context of Best Value. Our research in London began immediately upon our arrival in Merton. This enabled us to attain a better understanding of the local community. We became familiar with the demographics of Merton to ensure our results represent a fair sampling of the population. This process first required that we determine what the ethnic populations are. Our development of a demographic understanding of Merton also involved a breakdown by region based on where residents live. Another important area of background research in Merton was the current methods of obtaining public opinion. For example, we needed to know if borough meetings were held, and how well attended they were.

As our report and study directly involved Best Value and planning, it was imperative that we fully understood their application and implications. We were able to locate documents and papers in the United Kingdom that we were not able to access in the United States that were useful to this project. To further our understanding of Best Value, we reviewed previously published documents from the Department of the Environment and Transport Regions that summarise Best Value indicators. A review of the Local Government Act of 1999 was also necessary, as it outlines recent Best Value policies and the process for the continuation of Best Value. Best Value pilot programmes in the City of Westminster and other cities and boroughs provided us with some examples of methods and practices that were effective, and others that were ineffective. In addition to Best Value, part of our primary goal was to understand the consultation process and how it relates to planning in the United Kingdom.

3.1.2 Face-to-Face Interviews

With the assistance of our liaison, we decided which public officials would be most valuable to interview. This was in an effort to continue to learn about the background of planning in London, current public participation in local government, and Best Value policies. Our strategy was to obtain contact information about these officials from our liaison, and use snowballing to access other pertinent interviewees. Snowballing is a social science method in which one person from a particular field refers the interviewer to other people in a similar field that will be able to assist in the research (Berg, 132). This was a continuous process that terminated when we obtained repeated results from these interviews. We acquired contacts with current Best Value officials, planning officials involved with Best Value, and elected officials in Merton.

The first step to obtaining qualitative information was to prepare purposeful interviews. We used an informative approach to interviewing to acquire data on Best Value. The information was readily known, so a direct approach was acceptable. Our interviews also helped us to understand the consultation practices that were currently in place. We emphasised the long-term benefits, including a better relationship between citizens and the government, and an improved method of public participation. Another benefit was providing the opportunity for citizens to have a direct involvement in borough planning.

3.2 Postal Survey

Prior to our arrival in London, and in an attempt to improve our response rate, we notified our participants of our survey through a letter. This letter provided introductory information, including who we are, what our survey is about, and what the benefits are to participation. Other information in the letter explained the process of choosing participants, provided contact information for further questions, and addressed confidentiality issues. Finally, our letter expressed our appreciation, and let these people know when to expect the survey. We prepared this letter and our liaison sent it out to the participants in the first week of January. Appendix A contains a copy of this letter that notified residents of our study.

We wrote a postal survey for these individuals before we arrived in London. This survey asked these selected individuals and groups how effectively the government is handling their feedback. It asked which methods would best encourage participation in borough-sponsored research. Such methods might include questionnaires, phone interviews, face-to-face interviews, borough meetings, post surveys, and focus groups.

The questions were designed to investigate the use of the Best Value policy in the consultation process. We used an informational survey to obtain these data. An informational approach to surveying is one in which there is little risk to the respondent in providing a response. Most of the questions are direct, not open-ended, and the information that they provide should be easily understood (Dillman, 58). The original survey is attached in Appendix B.

The survey was divided into two sections. The first section involved general questions on public participation that would motivate the respondents to reply and gain their interest. The second set of questions contained more specific questions on borough planning. We believed these respondents were willing to participate, as they had already returned a survey in the past.

In an effort to remove cultural differences between our American English and British English, we pre-tested our questions with a focus group. A focus group is a guided conversation with a purpose and is conducted with multiple people (Berg, 100). A properly facilitated focus group is an easy and effective way to accrue research data. Within the first week, we held this focus group with four members of the Planning Policy Team in the Merton Civic Centre in order to accomplish this pre-testing.

Pre-testing is a vital part of any social science research method because it identifies weaknesses in the content of the questions. For example, weaknesses may include questions with multiple meanings, or long, complicated questions. Also, questions that do not motivate response indicate weaknesses. We corrected these weaknesses in order to ensure our questions elicit the type of responses we seek. We also found out if members of our intended audience would understand the meanings of the

questions. Pre-testing also helped us to determine whether or not the length of the survey was appropriate. We modified our survey to make it shorter and clearer, and distributed it to our participants. Attached in Appendix C is a copy of our revised survey, and the cover letter that we included in our posting.

In order to select the participants of our survey, we obtained a listing from our liaison of the 321 respondents to the 1998 questionnaire “Towards Merton in 2011.” From this list, we randomly chose a sample of 168 subjects. Simple random sampling stipulates that each member of the 321 has an equal chance of being selected (Berg, 228). We accomplished this by placing all 321 names in a hat and drawing out 168 names. We decided on a sample size of 168 through the use of statistical formulas to obtain an 80% response rate with a 95% confidence level (Salant, 55). An 80% response rate is a goal, but a 50% response rate is acceptable. A 50% response rate ensures that more of the information is correct than incorrect. For example, if only 20% of our sample responds, then there is a chance that 80% of our sample could have a completely different opinion.

Upon completion of the pre-testing stage, we corrected problems with our survey, and posted the survey to the randomly selected individuals. Our liaison provided the addresses and means to distribute this survey. To provide a beneficial, timely, and accurate response, we sent this survey out to the 168 participants at the beginning of the second week we were in London, on 25 January 2000. We requested that the survey be returned within two weeks after reception. If the survey was not returned within two weeks, we assumed a lack of participant interest. Due to time constraints, we did not follow up with these individuals. Consequently, we utilised information obtained from

phone interviews to insure that Merton Council received enough information from numerous respondents.

3.3 Phone Interviews

In social science research it is critical to use multiple research methods in an effort to decrease the survey bias that can occur with the use of only a single method. Poor response rates, high implementation costs, or physical inability to contact interviewees are also reasons to use multiple methods. Therefore, another method we used was phone interviews. Through these phone interviews, we attempted to contact all of the 153 respondents to Merton's questionnaire that were not included in our original sample. However, our sample was reduced to 111 out of the 153 because some people did not reveal their telephone numbers. We asked the interviewees about their thoughts, opinions, and ideas on participation in borough planning. These questions were the same as the questions asked in our postal survey, but were tailored to a phone interview format. A copy of this transcript is in Appendix D.

Our central objective in these surveys was to determine how residents would rate their involvement in the planning process. We also wanted to clarify the residents' opinions on the ability of Merton Council to respond to their views. Specifically, we wanted residents to prioritise the quality of services delivered. This included how they rated council feedback, types of consultation, and the involvement of their participation in Merton planning issues. Upon completion of each interview, we immediately transcribed it, to assure that the information was accurate in the final report.

3.4 Methods for Analysis

In the third week of the project, we began content analysis that related our interviews and surveys to the consultation process. Content analysis is a systematic method of counting words, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts, and semantics to find common links in research data (Berg, 231). This is a quantitative approach to evaluate qualitative information to draw conclusions that are replicable by other researchers. Through this process, we found common links or similar understandings among the interviewees and participants of our survey. Once this process of content analysis was completed, our group recommended methods to obtain the citizens' thoughts, opinions, ideas, and concerns about planning. We checked the usefulness of the information, and more specifically, determined how the results would help the Borough of Merton ensure Best Value in future consultation processes. In order to allow time for revision of our report, we started to write the final report by the fourth week. Through this process we determined the information relevant to providing recommendations on citizen participation in borough planning.

We continued to analyse and validate our research results in the fifth week. This served as a check on the consultation process to ensure that planning is done based on the needs of the citizens of Merton.

We completed writing the final report by the end of week six, and included graphs, charts, and other interpretative tools. We compiled all interview notes into final results, and suggested the most appropriate methods to ensure Best Value is utilised in the future consultation processes.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SURVEY RESPONSES

4.1 Demographics

The Borough of Merton can be broken down geographically into Wimbledon, Mitcham, Morden, and Colliers Wood. There are socio-economic differences between each of these areas of residency. The population of Merton is 83.7% white, and 16.3% is a mix of ethnic minorities (Merton, Population, 3). There is a possibility that responses to the survey will vary as a result of these differences.

4.2 Postal Survey

We sent out 168 postal surveys on 25 January 2000, the beginning of the second week of our project. Through the 87 responses we received by 9 February 2000, we acquired important data on public participation, consultation preferences, feedback preferences, and Council approval. Our return rate graphed against time can be found in Appendix G.

Our 87 respondents (52% response rate) included a wide variety of participants. There were respondents from under twenty years of age to over eighty years of age. We also received surveys from several different areas of Merton as well as areas outside of Merton. In all we received responses from nine different areas. Because of our small sample size, percentages can be misleading and difficult to interpret correctly. In some cases there were only two or three responses from a particular area. Along with various ages and locations we also received responses from people of six different ethnic origins. Again, we have a small sample size, which made drawing accurate conclusions based on demographics difficult.

4.3 Phone Interviews

Using our additional method of phone interviews to contact residents of Merton, we were able to obtain further relevant information. We separated the original list of 321 names into a list of those to whom we sent a postal survey, and those we contacted through phone interviews. The total number of people on our phone interview list was 138. This list of names does not include everyone else on the original list because there were 9 repeated names, and 15 respondents who gave no identification.

<u>Summary of Phone Interview Process</u>	
Total number of names on the phone interview list	138
Number of names that did not have a phone number given	27
Numbers that were incorrect (either fax numbers, wrong residence, etc.)	15
Number of people who were phoned and not interviewed (no answer, not home after multiple attempts, person not living in Merton anymore, etc.)	65
People who requested the survey faxed to them (none of these were returned)	3
People who were successfully interviewed over the phone.	28
People who answered the specific questions related to the 1998 consultation.	8
People who answered general questions related to participation and planning.	22
Number of Respondents who answered both sets of survey questions	2

Table 4.1

We conducted these phone interviews throughout the day during weeks three and four. As expected, we were able to contact many organisations on our list during the daytime hours and many of the residents in the evening. Each interview lasted about five minutes, and we were generally able to conduct about four to five interviews per hour. Immediately after we completed each interview, we needed to transcribe in greater detail

the responses of each individual. Overall, the phone interview process was tedious and did not provide much information that we did not receive through the postal survey.

We acquired the following data from both the postal survey and the phone survey. These include a total of 115 responses. We broke down these data into several categories. The following headings break down our response into age, location in which the respondents live, and ethnic origin.

4.4 Age

Of 115 respondents, 108 provided an age. This is 94% of the total response.

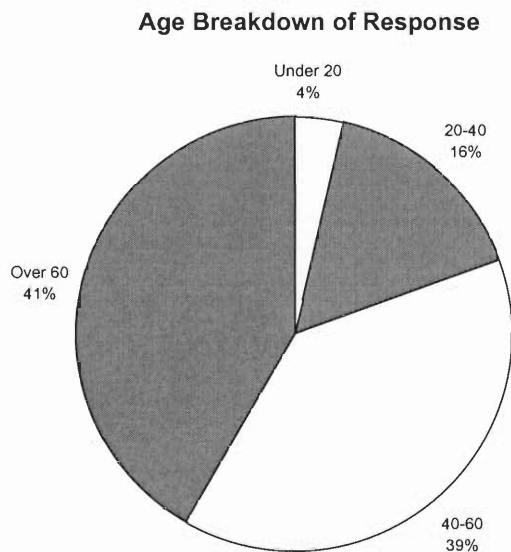


Figure 4.1

4.5 Area of Residency

Of the 115 respondents, 105 provided the area in which they lived. This was 91% of the total response.

Area of Residency



4.6 Ethnic Origin

Of the 115 respondents, 92 provided their ethnicity. This is 80% of the total response.

Ethnic Origin

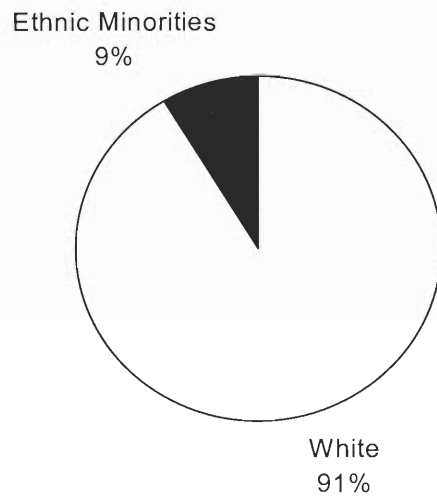


Figure 4.3

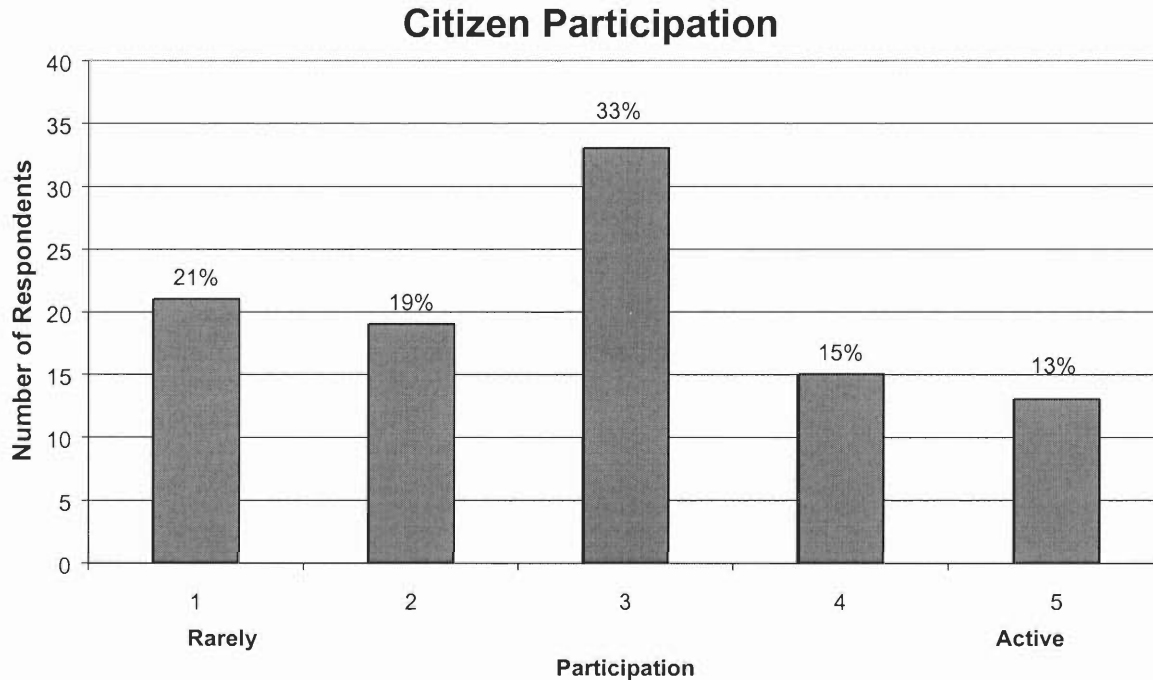
5.0 DATA BASED ON SURVEY QUESTIONS

5.1 Participation Data

The first section of our survey had questions based on the type and frequency of each individual's participation in Merton. The respondents were asked to rate their participation with Merton Council on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being rarely participating in Merton, and 5 being actively involved. We also asked the respondents how frequently they participated in terms of weeks, months, or years. Moreover, we asked the form of participation and their reasons for participating. The following section gives a detailed answer to each of these questions:

Question 1: "How would you rate your participation with Merton Council?"

88% (101 of the 115) of the total respondents answered the first question.



(The above percentages are based on 101 respondents.)

Figure 5.1

Question 2: “How frequently do you participate in Merton?”

93% (107 of the 115) of the total respondents answered the second question.

7% of the 107 respondents claim to participate in some form once a week.

22% of the respondents claim to participate in some form once a month.

30% of the respondents claim to participate twice a year.

9% of the respondents claim to participate yearly.

27% of the respondents claim to only participate when approached.

5% of the respondents claim they never participate in any Merton Consultations.

Question 4: “What are some of your reasons for using these methods [see question 3] to participate?”

87% (100 of the 115) of the total respondents answered the fourth question.

14% of the 100 respondents said that they were willing to participate because the time required was minimal.

16% of the respondents said that they participated because they were actively involved in the local government.

28% of the respondents said that they participated for various other reasons. For example many people said they participated because they were part of a residents’ association. Others claimed that they were fighting for their community (Appendix H, 88).

52% of the respondents said the only reason that they participated was because someone approached them and asked for their participation.

54% of the respondents said that they were willing to participate because there were benefits to participation. Respondents commented about the effect that planning could have on one's family.

5.2 Consultation Method Data

This first section also contained questions dealing with consultation methods. We gave participants a list of different methods of consultation, and we asked respondents to choose those methods that they had previously used. They were also asked about those methods they would most likely use in the future. As seen from the graphs below, most of the respondents like to receive some type of posting.

The following graph, figure 5.2, relates questions three and five. These questions directly address past and future consultations.

Question 3: “*What forms of participation apply to your involvement with Merton planning in the last year (1999)?*”

85% (98 of the 115) of the respondents answered the third question.

(The percentages below are based on 98 respondents.)

Question 5: “*In the future, what types of consultation would you be most likely to respond to regarding planning matters in Merton?*” 90% (104 of the 115) of the respondents answered the fifth question. (Percentages based on 104 respondents.)

Past and Future Participation

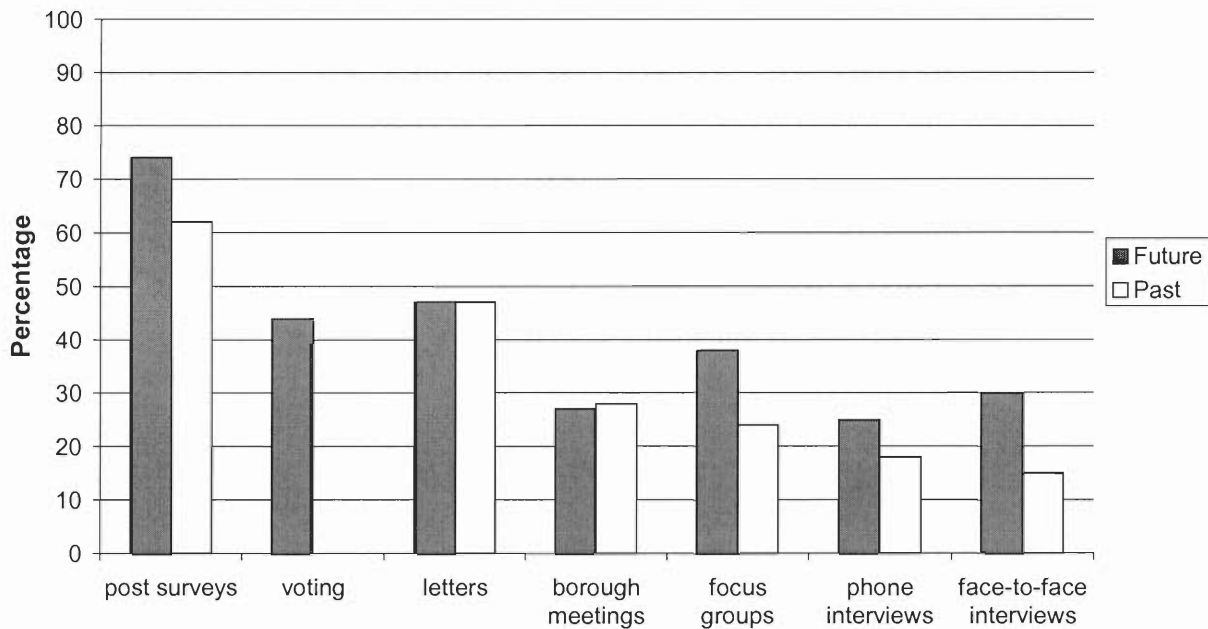


Figure 5.2

5.3 Feedback Data

In order for the consultations to be effective, feedback to the consulted individuals is necessary. Therefore, we asked questions on the type of feedback that citizens would want from the council. Questions eight and fourteen asked about feedback.

Question 8: “Through what methods do you obtain information concerning Merton Council planning activities?” 90% (104 of the 115) of the total respondents answered the eighth question. (The percentages below are based on 104 respondents.)

Question 14: “Through what methods would you like Merton Council to provide feedback from the 1998 survey?”

76% (87 of the 115) of the total respondents answered the fourteenth question.

(The percentages below are based on 87 respondents.)

Past and Future Feedback

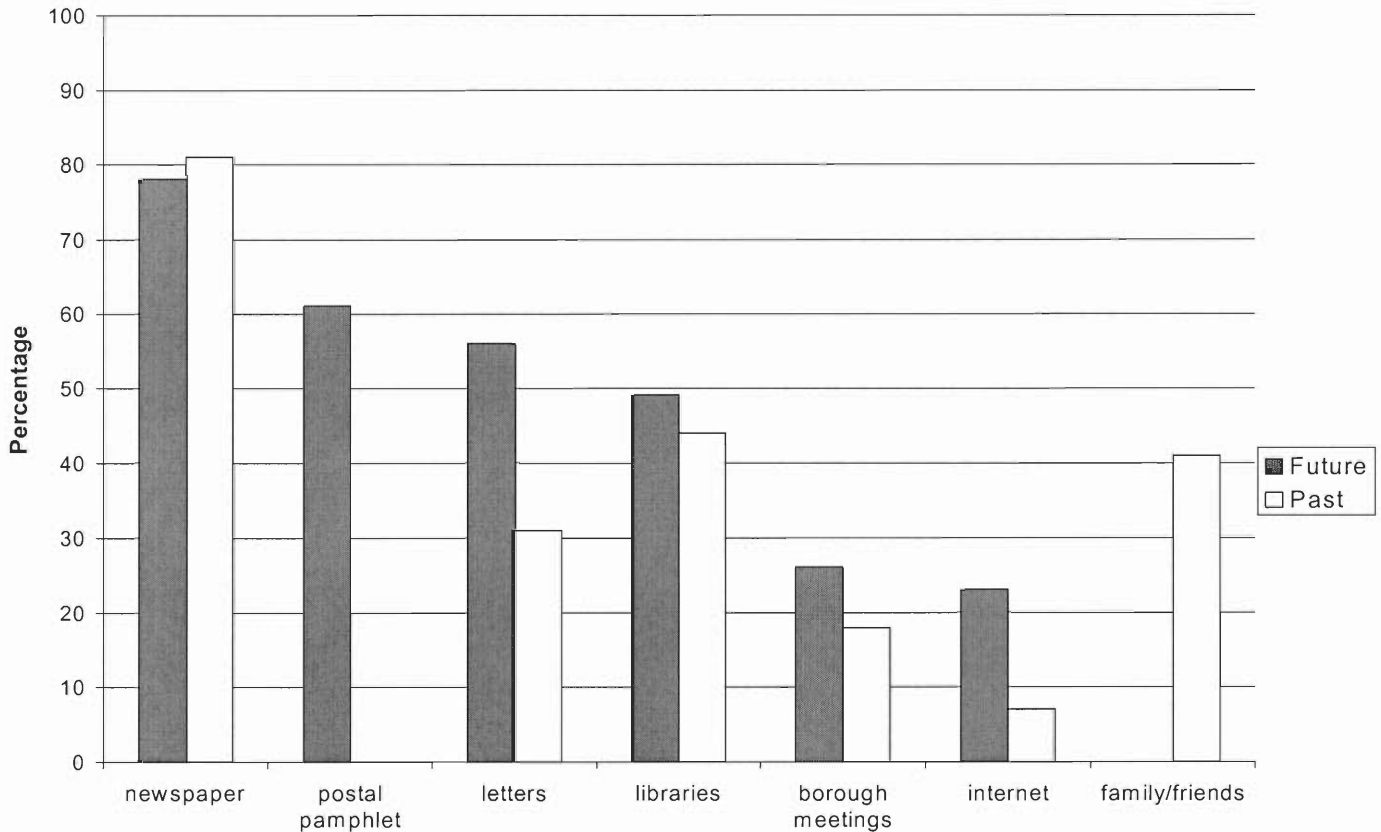


Figure 5.3

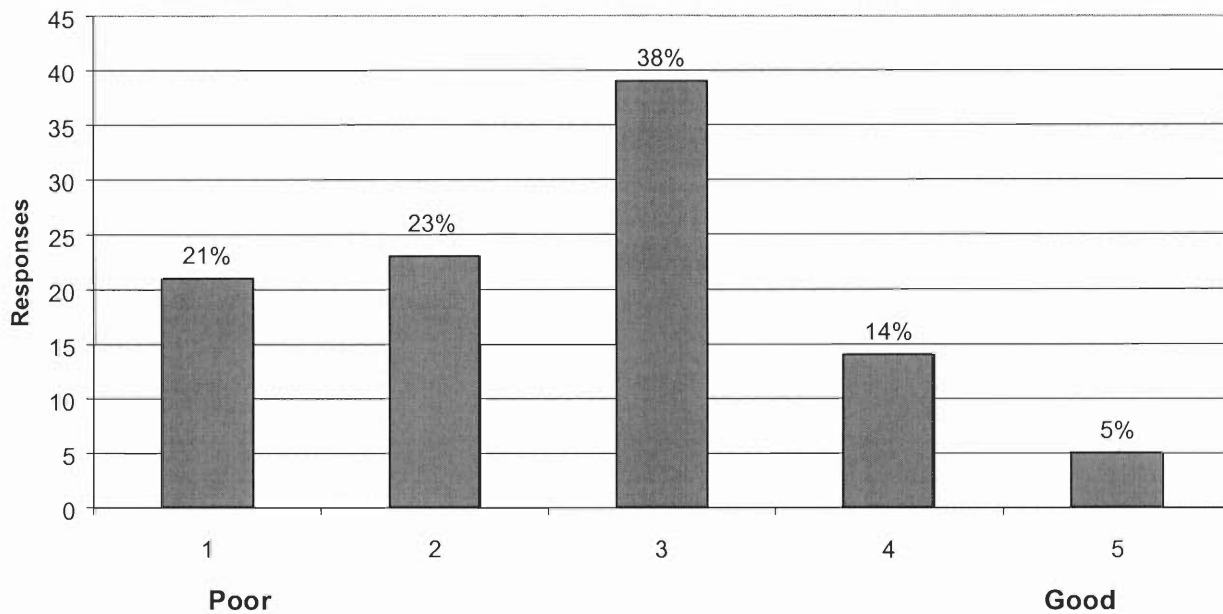
5.4 Council Approval Data

The final part of the first section of our survey dealt with approval ratings of the council. We asked the participants how well they felt Merton Council understood their views. We also asked if they thought everyone in Merton received an equal representation in the borough. In addition, we asked who they thought should be involved in decision making for Merton planning issues.

Question 10: “Do you think Merton Council understands what the borough residents and businesses want in planning?”

89% (102 of the 115) of the total respondents answered the tenth question.

Borough Understanding



(The above percentages are based on 102 respondents.)

Figure 5.4

Question 11: “In the Council’s efforts to obtain resident views on planning, how effective do you think their methods are in obtaining opinions from minority groups?”

65% (75 of the 115) of the total respondents answered the eleventh question.

Obtaining Views of Ethnic Minorities

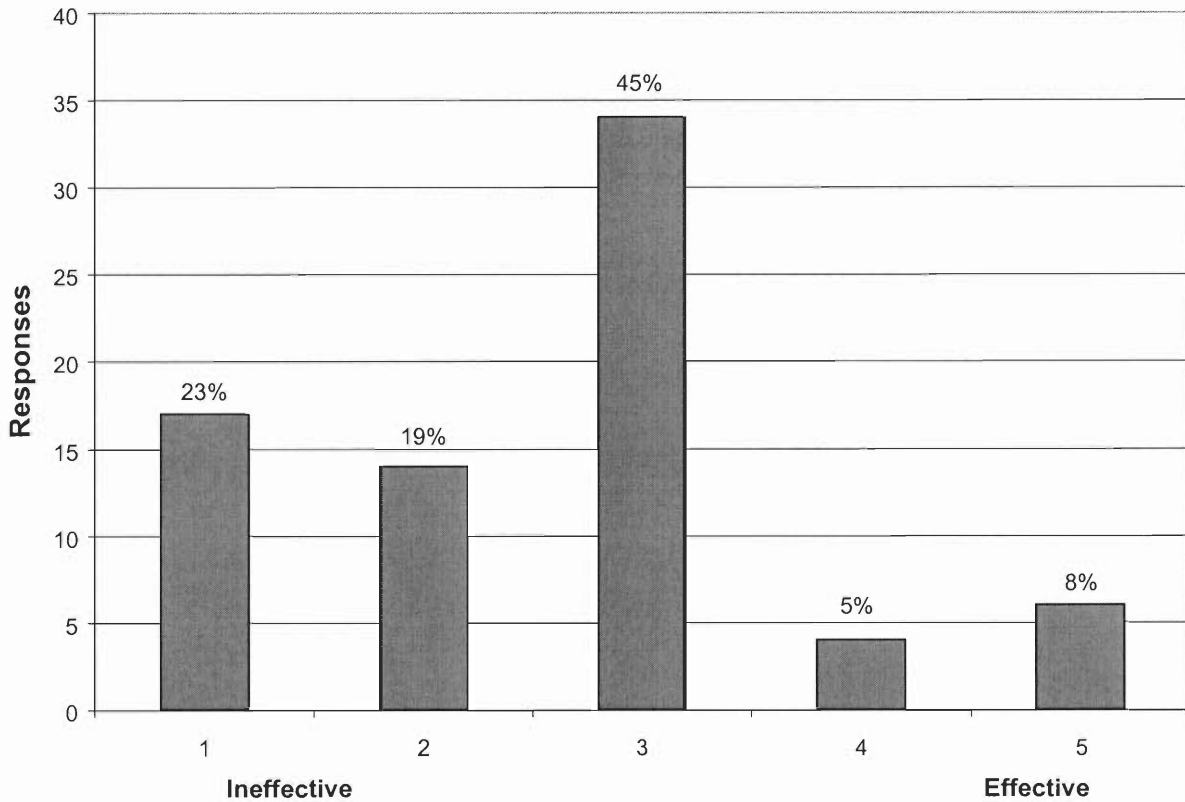


Figure 5.5

In conjunction with question eleven, question twelve asked more specifically about minority groups. We asked whether or not the residents in Merton feel that youths, elderly, ethnic minorities, or disabled people receive more or less representation than other groups in Merton. This question was broken down into four parts, and all four parts are shown on the following graph in figure 5.6.

Question 12a: “Do you feel youths get more or less representation than others on Merton planning matters?”

57% (66 of the 115) of the total respondents answered question twelve (a).

Question 12b: “Do you feel the elderly get more or less representation than others in Merton planning?”

59% (68 of the 115) of the total respondents answered question twelve (b).

Question 12c: “Do you feel ethnic minorities get more or less representation than others on Merton planning matters?”

50% (57 of the 115) of the total respondents answered question twelve (c).

Question 12d: “Do you feel the disabled get more or less representation than others on Merton planning matters?” 50% (58 of the 115) of the total respondents answered question twelve (d).

(The percentages below are based on the number of respondents to each individual part of the question.)

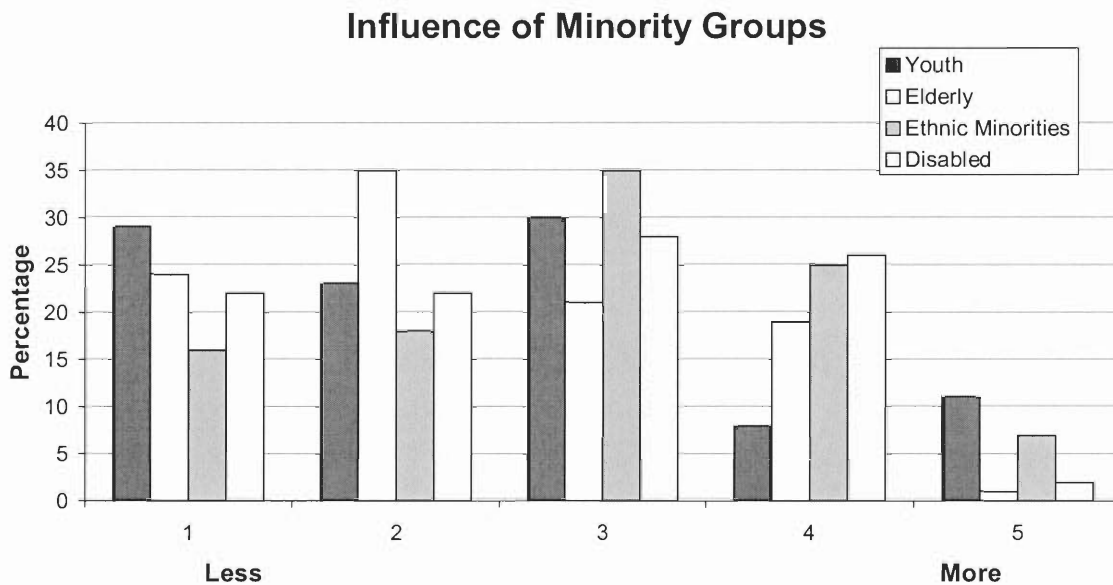


Figure 5.6

6.0 DATA BASED ON PAST PARTICIPATION

6.1 Past Surveys

We broke the survey into two sections. The second section asked the respondents if they remembered responding to the consultation survey “Towards Merton in 2011.” Merton administered this past survey in September of 1998. Our purpose in asking the respondents about the survey was to look at the effectiveness and efficiency of past consultations. We also wanted to see if the respondents approved of the way consultations are implemented in Merton. The following data helped us in our analysis of these questions.

6.2 Recollection of the 1998 Survey

Question 13: “Do you remember the September 1998 leaflet and survey that asked for opinions on major planning issues in Merton?”

77% (89 of the 115) of the total respondents answered the thirteenth question.

72% of the 89 respondents answered yes, that they did remember taking the September 1998 survey. Many respondents gave comments about the effectiveness of the survey. The most common theme in these comments was that the survey was too general.

6.3 Approval of Consultation Process

Question 16: “Do you think the Council took account of your views on planning after you responded to the September 1998 survey “Towards Merton in 2011”?”

40% (46 of the 115) of the total respondents answered the sixteenth question.

59% of the respondents wrote that the Council did not take account of their views after acquiring them through the survey. There were several comments with this question showing a lack of confidence in the Council.

Question 17: “*Did Merton Council provide easily obtainable results from this survey?*”

59% (68 of the 115) of the total respondents answered the seventeenth question.

71% of the respondents felt that feedback on the survey was not easily obtainable.

Again there were several negative comments.

7.0 ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

We have made comparisons and analysed the responses to our survey based on similarities of responses in areas including participation, consultation, feedback, and approval of Merton Council. We also compared our responses to some of the results received from the Merton Town Planning Services Project, and used Best Value indicators for further analysis. Through our analysis, we found certain areas of dissatisfaction with Merton Council and several recommendations for improvement. Extensive written comments from the surveys provided a further explanation to many of the quantitative responses. We quoted some of these comments in the analysis section. A compilation of all of the comments received through the survey is in Appendix H. This analysis section evaluates the data outlined in the previous section in the following order:

- Participation
- Consultation Methods
- Feedback
- Council Approval
- Responses based on the 1998 Questionnaire
- Comparisons to the Merton Town Planning Services Project

7.1 Participation

(Based on questions #1, 2, and 7)

How do residents rate their participation and how often do they participate in planning?

- 73% of respondents rated their participation as ranging from rarely participating to expressing only an average level of participation.
- The majority stated they participated twice yearly, and the second largest group participated only when approached by the council.
- Others noted that they participated only when issues interested them.
- Residents felt uninformed because information was not easily available or publicised enough.
- Written comments indicated a lack of specific information.
 - Example: “Depends on issues, how it affects the borough and whom it affects. On large issues, Merton is quite good. On more local issues, less so” (Appendix H, 91).

Summary of Results:

The responses indicated that residents are interested in planning, but a lack of available information and specific consultation resulted in low participation.

(Based on questions #1, 2, and 4)

What are some of the reasons for resident participation?

- 54% of the respondents participated because of a personal interest.
- 52% responded as a result of being approached.
- Many wrote and outlined specific issues that encourage them to participate.

Most frequent topics included:

- Environmental concerns
- Education

- Transportation
- Six respondents stated their reason for participation was a result of being members of a residents' association.
- Many comments such as “the issues had a direct affect on my concerns” (Appendix H, 88) supported the idea that personal interest was the main reason for participation.

Summary of Results:

1. Resident participation is dependent on designing consultation methods aimed at specific areas of concern.
2. Residents expected the council to inform them on specific issues and seek out their participation by addressing their areas of interest.

7.2 Consultation Methods

(Based on questions #1, 3, and 5)

What forms of consultation do residents participate in now and what forms will they most likely participate in for the future?

- 62% stated they had participated in a postal survey in the past.
- 74% of respondents would most likely participate in a postal survey in the future.
- 47% claimed participating through letters to the Council on specific issues.
- 47% also claimed they would participate through letters in the future.

- Hand written comments noted that many residents participated through various council committees including Residents Associations, and Environmental committees.
- The Internet was not favoured as a consultation method, but was more popular as a source of feedback from consultations.

Summary of Results:

1. There is not a significant problem with the consultation methods that Merton Council uses but the content and implementation of consultation practices are a source of concern for residents.
2. The most effective methods for consultation are postal surveys and letters.

(Based on questions #4, 7, 10, and 13)

How informed do residents feel about planning?

- 83% of the participants answered that the council was average to below average on a rating scale of how well the council informed them on planning issues.
- Some of the more frequent themes to responses in the written comments were:
 - The Council should make better use of the local newspaper and library for informing residents.
 - The Council failed to provide adequate information on specific planning issues.
 - The Council did not incorporate residents' views when making planning decisions.

- The Council released information on planning to the public after the policies were in effect.

Summary of Results:

1. Residents expressed an interest in obtaining more specific and clearly written information from the council on planning issues.

Example: “Information is often displayed in the library or Centre Court, but it is not always clear to understand. Maps and diagrams are often confusing” (Appendix H, 90).

2. Respondents felt that Merton Council does not address their views because they do not receive feedback from their participation.

7.3 Feedback

(Based on questions #8, 14, and 20)

What methods do residents use to obtain feedback on consultations and what methods will they use in the future?

- Of the 56 individuals who wrote specific comments when asked how they obtained feedback, 43% of them noted using the library or a local newspaper.
- When asked about receiving feedback from our survey, residents preferred local newspapers and postal pamphlets.
- 81% answered that they already receive their information from the local newspaper.
- The second most popular response was to receive information through the library.

- For future methods of feedback:
 - 78% would seek feedback through the local newspaper.
 - 61% would want feedback from a direct postal pamphlet.
- Respondents were also concerned about the placement of the information in the newspaper.

Summary of Results:

1. Residents felt that decreased communication results in decreased participation.
2. Residents clearly expressed preferred methods of feedback including newspapers and postal pamphlets.
3. Written comments indicated that those methods were not used enough.
4. They were concerned with how specific, accessible, and readable the results actually were.

7.4 Approval

(Based on questions #10, 11, and 15)

How well does Merton Council understand your views in planning?

- 81% gave Merton Council a rating of average or below average in understanding what they wanted in planning.
- Comments focused on three main areas on which residents felt Merton Council could improve:
 - Providing more detailed feedback.

Example: “There should be more detailed information sent out, instead of us seeking it” (Appendix H, 94).

- Conducting more focused consultations.

Example: “People are not given any consultation on planning conditions; have more posters and leaflets about future developments” (Appendix H, 95).

- Incorporation of the responses obtained through consultations.

Example: “They do try, application of results and opinion surveys is not usually thought through. They should ask more in-depth questions” (Appendix H, 94).

Summary of Results:

1. Residents approve of Merton Council, but wrote extensive comments on recommendations to improve methods to obtain and implement residents’ contributions.

(Based on question #12)

Do residents feel the Council obtains an equal representation in consultation?

- 87% rated the Council as average or below average in their ability to gain minority opinions.
- Youth representation was rated below average by 32%.
- The elderly was rated as having a low influence by 69%.
- Ethnic minorities had little influence as rated by 34%.
- The disabled were rated below average by 44%.
- Many did not respond to this question because they had no knowledge about minority representation in Merton Council.

Summary of Results:

1. Residents felt that Merton Council is not completely effective in obtaining opinions from minorities.
2. Respondents believe that minorities have an average or low influence on planning decisions.
3. Residents believe that the council is ineffective not only in obtaining minority opinions, but also the opinions of non-minorities as well.

(Based on question #6)

Who do residents feel should make decisions regarding planning?

- Most felt that Councillors should have the most influence in making planning decisions.
- The general public was the second most frequent response.
- Respondents commented that those affected by the planning decision should have more of an influence on the decision.

Summary of Results:

1. Residents want more of an influence in the planning decision process, but still felt that councillors should have the most authority in decisions. We understand that legislation requires that councillors make the final planning decisions, however, our results show that the public desires more involvement in the process.

(Based on question #9)

Do respondents place value on cost or quality of planning services?

- Respondents valued high quality of services much more than maintaining low costs of services.
- Many respondents did not respond to this question because they felt there was no correlation between high quality and low cost of services.

Example: “I do not agree that these are tied. I value the quality the most” (Appendix H, 93).

- Others responded with answers that were average because they stated:

Example: “High cost does not necessarily mean high quality” (Appendix H, 93).

Summary of Results:

1. Although respondents felt quality of services was the most important, the majority of respondents were from the more affluent area of Wimbledon. Many respondents also believe that there is not a connection between cost and quality.

7.5 Responses Based on the 1998 Questionnaire

(Based on questions #13-18)

How did residents view the 1998 questionnaire entitled “Towards Merton in 2011”?

- Most felt Merton Council made an honest effort to obtain their views.
- The majority liked the form of the consultation.
- Most felt it was easy to understand and covered the main issues.
- The majority stated that it needed to be more specific.

Example: “I think it could have asked more detailed questions in order to better understand the reasons behind the answers” (Appendix H, 99).

- When asked about feedback from this consultation, most favoured newspapers, then postal pamphlets and libraries.
- 60% of the respondents felt that Merton Council did not provide easily obtainable results.

Example: “Where are the results published?” (Appendix H, 101).

Summary of Results:

1. Many felt that this consultation was a good first attempt, but needed more specific questions.
2. Some residents noted that they obtained results through their Residents’ Association, or library, but many were concerned that they did not receive any feedback.

7.6 Comparison to Merton Town Planning Services IQP

How do our results compare with the Merton Town Planning Services IQP study?

We compared our results with the Merton Town Planning Services IQP study. Similar to our project, Merton Town Planning Services posted a survey, which also asked some questions about preferred consultation and feedback methods. However, the Merton Town Planning Services study sent their survey to members of residents’ associations, whereas we sent our survey to community members who responded to the earlier questionnaire concerning planning issues. Certain ideas and areas of concern were

expressed in the results of both surveys. There were also results that were in stark contrast to our survey. The following information compares and contrasts results obtained from both studies.

Influence on Planning

- Merton Town Planning Services: 86.5% of residents' association members felt that residents have an average to low influence on planning (Cardinal, 31).
- Our Consultation: 81% of respondents felt that Merton Council has an average to low understanding of what they want in planning issues.

Interest in Planning

- Merton Town Planning Services: 89.7% of residents' association members expressed an average to high level of interest in town planning (Cardinal, 31).
- Our Consultation: The majority of respondents noted a personal interest and listed specific issues that encouraged their participation in planning.

Obtaining More Detail in Planning

- Merton Town Planning Services: 52.9% would prefer more detailed and longer reports as opposed to shorter and more general reports (Cardinal, 32).
- Our Consultation: Written comments indicated a need for more specific information from the Council.

Consultation Methods

- Merton Town Planning Services: Postal surveys were the most frequent response for future form of consultation method.
- Our Consultation: Postal surveys were the most frequent response for future form of consultation method.

Methods for Feedback

- Merton Town Planning Services: Preferred residents' association meetings, but second most frequent response was newspapers and postal pamphlets.
- Our Consultation: Newspapers and postal pamphlets was most frequent response for methods of feedback.

Summary of Results:

1. Both residents and residents' association members felt Merton Council was not incorporating residents' views in planning.
2. A majority of respondents in both surveys expressed an interest in planning issues.
3. Both surveys showed that the Council did not provide enough detailed information.
4. When asked about forms of consultation, postal surveys were the preferred method by the majority of the respondents.
5. As a method of feedback a large majority of respondents suggested newspapers and postal pamphlets.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

We have several recommendations for Merton and other boroughs when designing consultation practices and feedback. We have also examined our study in a Best Value context, and have recommendations for compliance with the new legislation.

8.1 Communication and Feedback Improvement

Based on our analysis, we offer the following suggestions on how to increase future public participation in Merton. The residents have expressed their desire to be involved in the planning process in the Borough, but feel they have been ignored in the past. According to our survey respondents, the Council in Merton does not have adequate communication with the residents.

The participants in our study said they would like more information that is easily accessible in the local newspapers and libraries. Improving the channel of communication through newspapers and libraries would hopefully reach a large number of residents. However, we realise that Merton Council has little influence over information printed in local newspapers. Although they submit press releases to a newspaper they have no guarantee their article will be published. The Council does, however, have control over what is published in the Merton Messenger and the information published in the libraries. Therefore, we recommended the Council use these media to inform the citizens of Merton on planning matters.

8.2 Newspapers

We believe the press releases sent to the newspapers and the articles appearing in the Merton Messenger should indicate exactly what the planning department is doing in a detailed manner. This material should also provide a notice of where the Council would

take comments, and where they would provide feedback. The articles should be published in a timely fashion so that the citizens can know about planning matters before final decisions are made. This will also give the citizens a chance to offer their opinion to the Council.

8.3 Libraries

From the information we have received, it seems that the residents use the library system in Merton quite frequently. The Council could publish clearly written, simple, yet detailed consultation results, borough meeting responses, future planning issues, and any other information concerning planning in the Borough, and place these documents in the libraries. Unlike the newspapers, the Borough would be able to publish all articles in the library. However, we recognise there are probably more people that read the newspapers each day than would go to the libraries. In accordance with our findings, we have already sent letters to our participants informing them that we will send this report to all libraries in Merton.

8.4 Meetings

Many respondents also want more personal contact with planning officials and Merton Council. Based on these comments, we recommended the council hold more regular meetings, and additional sessions when there is concern about issues in the Borough. These issues may be more easily covered in a discussion group format, instead of a formal meeting. A slightly more casual approach may encourage more residents to attend, and create a less intimidating environment. One college student in our study recommended holding meetings at the college with planning officials present.

8.5 Postal Survey

For future consultations, we recommend a postal survey for a significant response. We received an excellent response rate from our postal survey (58%), and many of the responses indicated the desire for more postings. However, our respectable response rate was directly affected by the fact that the participants in our sample were purposively selected based on previous consultation involvement. Therefore, we recommend that Merton use purposive sampling in order to key in on certain groups such as residents' associations to increase response rate and obtain a larger amount of information from their consultation. Ongoing contact with residents' associations in the future may help to involve and keep more people informed and interested. We feel that Merton could send an update, perhaps in the form of a newsletter, to these groups on a regular basis.

8.6 Phone Interviews

On the other hand, we do not recommend the use of phone interviews for consultations in the future. Comparing our phone interviews to our postal survey reveals the postal survey to be more effective. Residents can take their time and fill out a postal survey at their own convenience. These people can write their extended comments and thoughts, whereas we were very limited in the amount of time that we were able to talk to people on the phone. The phone interviews were also time consuming, more difficult to carry out, and produced less information per interview. However, phone interviews may be useful for issues that can be covered quickly and in a simple format. On the phone, people were generally willing to talk to us, but did not have a long period of time to spend on the phone. These people also answered the shorter and simpler questions in our survey much more easily than the more detailed questions.

8.7 Best Value Findings

During the course of our study, we have kept in mind the underlying theme of Best Value. Based on the above information relating phone interviews and postal surveys, the postal surveys appear to be the more effective and efficient method of consultation. A large amount of information can be gathered in a rather short period of time through the use of the post.

The newspapers and libraries also appear to be very efficient and economical. Many people commented that they read the local newspapers, and the libraries also seem to be well used. As far as Best Value Indicators are concerned, response rate is a major indicator in the success of a consultation. Our response rate was high, so we recommend the use of similar methods in the future for good response rates.

We have also produced several recommendations on how Merton consultations can better comply with Best Value Indicators. We selected several indicators that we felt were relevant to planning consultations. These recommendations are based on written comments provided by our survey participants. The recommendations are located in Appendix I.

8.8 Further Studies for Merton

Upon the completion of this project, we also have some recommendations for further research on the topic of consultation practices. Our study was limited to the respondents of previous surveys, so we were not able to focus on any particular group of people in Merton. Perhaps Merton could do a study looking in depth at each ward in the borough separately. We tried to obtain responses from as many minority groups as we could, but our list was too small and did not contain enough diversity. We were not able

to relay any recommendations to Merton with specific regard to effective consultation practices for different groups of people, or different wards.

Through our comments we realised that citizens are not as interested in general aspects of planning, but are extremely interested when the planning issue directly affects them or their family. For this reason, we suggest that Merton use purposive sampling. This would enable Merton to key in on one or more groups and ask detailed, specific questions in the consultations. For example, Merton could send a survey to residents of Wimbledon concerning changes to Wimbledon Town Centre, but would not send the same survey to the rest of Merton. Vague consultations were a major complaint from the citizens of Merton and this would be an easy and effective method of correction.

Along with research on consultation practices, further research on Best Value also appears necessary. We had much difficulty writing questions on our survey dealing with quality and cost. Best Value seeks to provide a satisfactory balance between these two factors, but many respondents replied with the obvious answer that they would want the highest quality at the lowest cost. We are unsure of methods to examine this issue, but feel it requires deeper investigation.

Many of our respondents replied that they were only involved in borough matters if they were approached, or asked by the borough. Some type of request for comments may provide more feedback and involvement from the residents. Through the comments received, excess consultation does not seem to be a problem. Citizens seem to want to help Merton when Merton seeks their contributions. Asking for more feedback from the public should be a common practice in Merton planning.

9.0 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

We believe that our careful planning and continual modifications throughout the study aided in the success of this project. We feel that some of our methods and management skills will help with the success of future IQPs and research projects.

9.1 Work Plans

We cannot emphasise enough the importance of having and maintaining a detailed work-plan. Although the deadlines for our work changed as a result of unforeseen circumstances, modifying the work-plan in accordance was extremely helpful. Our liaison helped in this process by reviewing our plan weekly and offering suggestions on how long different tasks would take. Our liaison also offered suggestions on how to prioritise our tasks based on relevance to our project. For example, we conducted our face-to-face interviews much later than our postal surveys, because we determined that our postal surveys would become part of our data, whereas our face-to-face interviews were only background information.

9.2 Types of Surveys

Our project utilised many different forms of consultation and surveying. Of these methods, we found certain methods to be more effective for obtaining different types of results.

9.2.1 Postal Surveys

Our final response rate on our postal survey was 58%, which was very effective for this type of consultation. We felt there were certain reasons for these results. Initially we created a survey that we understood would need alterations. We made sure to create a draft of this survey before arriving in London, so that we could post the survey as soon as

possible. Before we posted our survey we went through many revisions with our liaison and other members of the department. Some of the revisions and advice in designing these surveys are as follows.

- Ensure the question is written to elicit the desired type of response. In a post survey it is crucial that the respondents understand what is asked because they will not be able to ask questions.
- Know to whom the survey was sent. We sent some of our surveys to members of residents associations, so they were well informed of the topics we were addressing. When writing the questions we made sure the wording was formal, and that we used British English in the questions.
- Send the survey as soon as possible. Because the term is only seven weeks, it is imperative to have as much time as possible to analyse the results.
- Cover letters are important. Make sure that the appearance is professional, use the term undergraduates as opposed to students (they are different in London), provide contact information, and be sure to set a deadline for the return of the survey.
- With revisions, we made our survey shorter and more specific. If the survey is too long, respondents may tend to skip over questions. Our survey was approximately 20 questions.
- Always leave a few blank lines for comments after each question. We found that many of the residents wanted to write reasons for their responses and this only enhanced our project results.

9.2.2 Phone Interviews

The response rate for our phone interviews was approximately 30%, but we found certain methods for achieving a better response rate. If the survey is short, concise, and requires only a direct response to the questions, phone interviews might be effective.

Some of the techniques we learned in the course of our project are written below.

- Have a set introduction. Most interviewees were willing to talk to us when they answered the phone. We emphasised that we were undergraduates from the United States, working for Merton Council. Making that statement seemed to encourage people in responding to our interview.
- Understand there is a limited amount of time on the phone. Although we tailored our original survey to a phone-interviewing format, most residents were anxious to finish the survey after only a few questions. We found that shortening the interview to only a few specific questions aids in the response rate. We also found that some individuals would have preferred answering the survey if it was faxed to them so that they could answer the questions at their leisure. Others wanted to call us back, and still others wanted us to call at a different time.
- Have answers to all the various questions that residents might ask about the purpose of the survey. We had the numbers ready and a set response to these queries.
- Overall, calling at night is the most effective. We found that most residents were home after five o'clock. However, many of the numbers that residents gave on our list were work numbers. This meant that we reached some of the

individuals more easily during the day. We also reached older residents during the daytime. Again, one must know the sample being interviewed.

9.2.3 Face-to-Face Interviews

We used face-to-face interviews for our background research. We had the most difficulty in getting clear and concise responses from the individuals we interviewed. We also had difficulty in getting answers to all of our questions in face-to-face interviews. However, these types of interviews were very effective for background information.

9.3 Organising Data

One of the main reasons we felt our project was successful was a result of our organisation. We thought about the type of analysis we would use before writing any of the questions. We organised the questions into groups for comparison and analysis. We also found that setting up a database early and keeping track of all the information gathered was crucial to a successful project. We continually analysed all our results as every survey was turned in. These were just a few of the methods we felt helped to make our project effective. Organisation, preparation, and effective work habits are the skills needed to create a valuable and superior project.

10.0 CONCLUSION

Through the use of face-to-face interviews, postal surveys, and phone interviews, we provided the Borough of Merton with several recommendations for future consultation processes. These suggestions included the use of postal surveys for consultations, with newspapers and postal pamphlets for feedback. We also recommended the use of more detail with clearer explanations in all communication media.

Our study also evaluated the consultation process in terms of Best Value with an emphasis on economy, effectiveness, and efficiency. We concluded in our findings that written and postal methods of communication are the most efficient and effective methods. Newspapers can reach many people, and were the most frequently requested form of feedback by the participants of our study. Postal surveys are efficient and economical because the cost to produce them is minimal, and residents are able to fill them in at their leisure. In our research, we also used the extensive comments that many of the respondents wrote to substantiate our results. Finally, we recommended areas of research for Merton to look at in greater depth. The time constraints on our project limited the extensiveness of our study. However, the information we gained contains some useful topics for further analysis.

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Appendix A

First Letter sent to Postal Survey Participants

PLANNING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION DIVISION

Head of Planning and Public Protection - Steve Clark

date: 6 January 2000
my ref: ES/PP/SC/WPI
please ask for: John Gleeson/Brian Papagni/Emily Reynolds
your ref: 0181-545-3063

London Borough of Merton
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden, Surrey SM4 5DX
DX 41650 Morden

Switchboard: 0181-543-2222
Minicom: 0181-545-3245
Telex: 893062
Fax: 0181-545-3326
Direct Line: 0181-545-3060

To Whom It May Concern:

We are researchers from Worcester Polytechnic Institute working for the borough of Merton. Within the next few weeks we will be sending you a survey in an effort to learn how well you feel your opinion is handled by the local government.

Your opinion is crucial to the local government. This survey will be conducted in order to make your opinion more effective in making changes in your community.

You were chosen because you expressed an interest in local government through your participation in the 1998 survey "Toward Merton in 2011." As was the case in that survey, this survey is completely confidential.

We would greatly appreciate your taking the few minutes necessary to complete and return the survey.

Yours sincerely,
Brian Papagni
John Gleeson
Emily Reynolds

13. Through what methods would you like the government to provide feedback regarding public participation?

Circle all that apply:

1. television
2. radio
3. newspaper
4. internet postings
5. postal pamphlets
6. borough meetings
7. other _____

14. When participating in local government are you always in favour of keeping low costs?

Circle only one:

1. always
2. sometimes
3. never
4. depends

15. When participating in local government do you always favour maintaining high quality?

Circle only one:

1. always
2. sometimes
3. never
4. depends

16. Which do you value more, a higher quality or a lower cost of service?

Higher quality

Lower cost

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

17. How directly do you think the public should be involved in local decision making?

Only Borough officials

Residents vote on

vote on issues as representatives

all issues

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

18. Do you think the local government understands what the borough residents want?

Yes

No

19. Please rate the local government's understanding of your views on topics concerning your community.

No understanding

Good understanding

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

20. In the government's efforts to obtain resident views, how effectively do you think their methods are in obtaining an equally represented opinion?

Ineffective Effective
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

21. Do you feel any of these groups gets more representation than others?

Circle all those that apply

1. youth
2. middle age
3. elderly

22. Do you feel any of these groups receives more representation than others?

Circle all that apply

1. Caucasian
2. Caucasian/Irish
3. African American
4. African
5. African Caribbean
6. Indian
7. Pakistani
8. Bangladeshi
9. Chinese
10. Tamil
11. Japanese
12. Other _____

23. If you have voiced your opinion in the past, how long has it taken before action was taken by the government?

1. I have never made recommendations to the government
2. Immediate action was taken
3. 1-3 months
4. 3-6 months
5. 6-9 months
6. 1 year or more
7. Action was never taken

24. How confident are you that the government is properly handling your opinions and views?

Not Confident Very Confident
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

25. How much do you value this survey?

Do Not Value Highly Value
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please provide us with any other thoughts concerning improvements on obtaining public opinion regarding participation in government.

Please circle the age bracket that corresponds to your age:

- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50-60
- 60-70
- 70-80
- 80-90

Appendix C

Final Draft of Postal Survey and Letter

PLANNING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION DIVISION

Head of Planning and Public Protection - Steve Clark

date: 21 January 2000
my ref: ES/PP/SC/WPI
please ask for: John Gleeson/Brian Papagni/Emily Reynolds
your ref: 0181-545-3063

London Borough of Merton
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden, Surrey SM4 5DX
DX 41650 Morden

Switchboard: 0181-543-2222
Minicom: 0181-545-3245
Telex: 893062
Fax: 0181-545-3326
Direct Line: 0181-545-3060

WPI:

BEST VALUE IN PLANNING SURVEY

JANUARY 2000

Dear Consultee,

We are undergraduates from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (USA) and are working with the Borough of Merton. As you may recall, at the beginning of January you were sent a letter informing you of this survey.

We are sending you this survey in order to learn your opinions on public participation for planning in Merton, specifically, with regards to the "Towards Merton in 2011" survey. The cover of that survey has been attached to serve as a reminder.

Planning affects many services provided by Merton Council including land use policies, environmental issues, transportation, education, and other areas of daily life. Your opinion is crucial to Merton Council in an effort to improve its services for the local community. This survey should help to make your opinion more effective in creating changes in your community.

Using the enclosed prepaid envelope, please respond in the next two weeks, as our research period in London is very brief. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact us at 0181-545-3063 or e-mail us at steve.cardis@merton.gov.uk. We would like to remind you that all information on this survey is completely confidential. If any questions are confusing or do not seem applicable to you, do not hesitate to omit those questions.

We greatly appreciate your time and response in this important research project and thank you for your participation in this survey.

Yours sincerely,
John Gleeson
Brian Papagni
Emily Reynolds

**WPI:
PLANNING CONSULTATION SURVEY
21 JANUARY 2000**

Please circle the number that corresponds to your response:

1. How would you rate your participation with Merton Council?

Rarely participate Actively involved
1 2 3 4 5

2. How frequently do you participate in Merton? (voting, questionnaires, surveys, etc.)

1. weekly (borough meetings)
2. once a month
3. twice a year
4. yearly
5. never
6. only when approached

3. What forms of participation apply to your involvement with Merton planning in the last year (1999)?

Circle all that apply:

1. post surveys
2. borough meetings
3. face-to-face interviews
4. phone interviews
5. focus groups (group discussion)
6. letters
7. other _____

4. What are some of your reasons for using these methods to participate?

Circle all that apply:

1. because you were approached
2. you are actively involved in local government
3. the time required was minimal
4. there were benefits to participation
5. other _____

5. In the future, what types of consultation would you most likely respond to regarding planning matters in Merton?

Circle all that apply:

1. post surveys
2. voting
3. Borough meetings
4. face-to-face interviews

- 5. phone interviews
- 6. focus groups (group discussion)
- 7. letters
- 8. other _____

6. Which of the following people do you think should make decisions involving planning?

Circle all that apply.

- 1. Councillors
- 2. Officers
- 3. General public
- 4. Citizens panel
- 5. Community forum
- 6. Other _____

7. How well do you feel Merton Council informs you on planning issues?

Well Informed					Not Informed
1	2	3	4	5	

(explain) _____

8. Through what methods do you obtain information concerning Merton Council planning activities?

Circle all that apply:

- 1. newspaper
- 2. borough meetings
- 3. internet
- 4. family or friends
- 5. letters
- 6. libraries
- 7. other _____

9. Which do you value more, the quality or the cost of planning services in Merton?

Low cost/ Low quality				High cost/ High quality
1	2	3	4	5

10. Do you think Merton Council understands what you want in planning?

Poor Understanding				Good Understanding
1	2	3	4	5

(explain) _____

Suggestions for improvement _____

11. In the Council's efforts to obtain resident views on planning, how effective do you think their methods are in obtaining opinions from minority groups?

Ineffective					Effective
1	2	3	4	5	

Suggestions for improvement _____

12. Do you feel any of these groups has more or less influence than others on Merton planning matters?

	Less			More	
youth	1	2	3	4	5
elderly	1	2	3	4	5
ethnic minorities	1	2	3	4	5
disabled	1	2	3	4	5

**Questions directly related to the September 1998 survey
"Towards Merton in 2011"**

13. Do you remember the September 1998 leaflet and survey that asked for opinions on major planning issues in Merton?

Yes No

If yes:

Did it cover the main issues related to you?	Yes	No
Did you like this form of leaflet?	Yes	No
Was it easy to understand?	Yes	No
Was it specific enough?	Yes	No

Other comments _____

14. Through what methods would you like Merton Council to provide feedback from the 1998 survey?

Circle all that apply.

- 1. Television
- 2. Letters
- 3. Radio
- 4. Newspaper
- 5. Internet posting
- 6. Postal pamphlet
- 7. Borough meetings
- 8. Libraries
- 9. Other _____

15. Do you think Merton Council made an honest effort to obtain your views and opinions on planning matters through the September 1998 consultation?

Yes No

(if no explain) _____

16. Do you think the Council took account of your views on planning after you responded to the September 1998 survey "Towards Merton in 2011"?

Yes No

(explain) _____

17. Did Merton Council provide easily obtainable results from this survey?

Yes No

(if no explain) _____

18. Did you see the report: "UDP Deposit Draft Statement of Publicity and Consultation," published in September 1999, which reported the results of the September 1998 survey?

Yes No

If Yes, where? _____

**WPI: Planning Consultation Survey
Feedback**

19. How much do you value the “WPI: Planning Consultation Survey”?

Do Not Value Highly Value
1 2 3 4 5

20. What type of feedback would you like with regards to the results of this survey?

Circle all that apply:

- 1. television
- 2. letters
- 3. radio
- 4. newspaper
- 5. internet postings
- 6. postal pamphlets
- 7. borough meetings
- 8. libraries
- 9. others _____

Please provide us with any other thoughts concerning improvements on obtaining public opinion regarding participation in planning for Merton.

Please circle the age bracket that corresponds to your age:

- Under 20
- 20-40
- 40-60
- Over 60

Appendix D Phone Interview Transcript

Phone Survey Introduction:

Hi, my name is _____, and I'm an undergraduate from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the United States working with Merton Council. Could I please speak with _____?

If NO:

Would you mind answering a few questions concerning your views on public participation in Merton?

(Start with general survey)

If YES:

I would like to briefly interview you about your views on public participation in Merton.

(Start with specific survey)

This interview should only take a few minutes, the results are completely confidential, and your feedback will help Merton Council better serve your needs as a citizen.

Conclusion of survey:

Do you have any other thoughts on how Merton could improve public participation with regards to planning?

Do you have Internet access?

If Yes: Are you online daily, weekly, or monthly?

(If not the person in our records)-----For our records only, could I please have your name?

If you don't mind my asking, for this study, are you in the age bracket of:

- Under 20 years old
- Between 20-40
- Between 40-60
- Over 60

**PHONE SURVEY
GENERAL**

1. How would you rate your participation with Merton Council, on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being actively participating and 1 being rarely participating?

2. How frequently do you participate with local government in Merton?

- a. Once a week
- b. Once a month
- c. Once a year
- d. Never

3. In the last year, have you:

- a. answered any post surveys?
- b. attended any borough meetings?
- c. participated in any face-to-face interviews in Merton?
- d. been involved in any phone interviews regarding Merton?
- e. been involved in any focus groups?
- f. replied to any letters that were distributed by the Merton Council?
- g. Can you think of any other ways that you participated in Merton Council?

4. What was your reason for participating in Merton council? Because:

- a) you were approached
 - b) you are actively involved in local government
 - c) the time required was minimal
- or
- d) there were benefits to participation

5. Of the following list, which form of consultation with regards to planning in Merton, would you most likely participate in? Please feel free to stop me at any point.

- 1. post surveys
- 2. Borough meetings
- 3. face-to-face interviews
- 4. phone interviews
- 5. focus groups (group discussion)
- 6. letters

Are there any other forms?

6. Of the following list, who do you think should make decisions involving planning? Please feel free to stop me at any point.

- a. Councillors
- b. Officers
- c. General public
- d. Citizens panel
- e. Community forum

Are there any other people?

7. How well informed do you feel about Merton Council planning issues, on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being not informed and 5 being well informed?

(explain) _____

8. Of the following list, which methods do you use to get information concerning Merton Council planning activities? Please feel free to stop me at any point.

1. internet
2. newspaper
3. borough meetings
4. family or friends
5. letters
6. libraries
7. other _____

9. Which do you value more, Low cost/ Low quality or High cost/ High quality of planning services in Merton?

9. (alternate) Which do you value more, low cost or high quality?

10. Do you think Merton Council understands what you want in planning?
Rating them on a scale from 1-5. 1 being poor 5 being good.

11. When the Council obtains views on planning, how effectively do you think they are in obtaining opinions from minority groups? Rating them on a scale from 1-5 with 1 being ineffectively and 5 being effectively.

Suggestions for improvement _____

12. On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you rate the representation of youth in Merton planning matters? 1 being poor and 5 being good.

Using the same scale, how would you rate the representation of the elderly?

The ethnic minorities?

The disabled?

**PHONE SURVEY
SPECIFIC**

**Questions directly related to the September 1998 survey
“Towards Merton in 2011”**

1. Do you remember the September 1998 leaflet and survey that asked for opinions on major planning issues in Merton?

Yes No ----(If No, go to general survey)

If yes:

Did it cover the main issues related to you?	Yes	No
Did you like this form of leaflet?	Yes	No
Was it easy to understand?	Yes	No
Was it specific enough?	Yes	No

Other comments _____

2. Of the following list, through what methods would you like Merton Council to provide feedback from the 1998 survey? Please feel free to stop me at any point.

- 8. Television
- 9. Letters
- 10. Radio
- 11. Newspaper
- 12. Internet posting
- 13. Postal pamphlet
- 14. Borough meetings
- 15. Libraries
- 16. Other _____

3. Do you think Merton Council made an honest effort to obtain your views and opinions on planning matters through the September 1998 consultation?

Yes No

(if no explain) _____

4. Do you think the Council took account of your views on planning after you responded to the September 1998 survey “Towards Merton in 2011”?

Yes No

(explain) _____

5. Did Merton Council provide easily obtainable results from this survey?

Yes No

(if no explain) _____

6. Did you see the report: “UDP Deposit Draft Statement of Publicity and Consultation,” published in September 1999, which reported the results of the September 1998 survey?
Yes No If Yes, where?

Appendix E

Data Summary

1. How would you rate your participation with Merton Council?

Rarely Participate	1	21
	2	19
	3	33
	4	15
Actively Participate	5	13

2. How frequently do you participate in Merton?

1. weekly	7
2. once a month	24
3. twice a year	32
4. yearly	10
5. never	5
6. only when approached	29

3. What forms of participation apply to your involvement with Merton planning in the last year?

1. post surveys	61
2. borough meetings	27
3. face-to-face interviews	15
4. phone interviews	18
5. focus interviews	24
6. letters	46
7. other	18

4. What are some of your reasons for using these methods to participate?

1. because you were approached	52
2. you are actively involved in local government	16
3. the time required was minimal	14
4. there were benefits to participation	54
5. other	28

5. In the future, what types of consultation would you most likely respond to regarding planning matters in Merton?

1. post surveys	77
2. voting	46
3. borough meetings	28
4. face-to-face interviews	31
5. phone interviews	26
6. focus groups	39
7. letters	49
8. other	12

6. Which of the following people do you think should make decisions involving planning?

1. Councillors	68
2. Officers	35
3. General public	54
4. Citizens panel	41
5. Community forum	45
6. Other	13

7. How well do you feel Merton Council informs you on planning issues?

Well Informed	1	4
	2	18
	3	41
	4	23
Not Informed	5	19

8. Through what methods do you obtain information concerning Merton Council planning activities?

1. newspaper	84
2. borough meetings	19
3. internet	7
4. family or friends	43
5. letters	33
6. libraries	46
7. other	26

9. Which do you value more, the quality or the cost of planning services in Merton?

Low cost/ Low quality	1	2
	2	1
	3	20
	4	32
High cost/ High quality	5	35

10. Do you think Merton Council understands what you want in planning?

Poor Understanding	1	21
	2	23
	3	39
	4	14
Good Understanding	5	5

11. In the Council's efforts to obtain resident views on planning, how effectively do you think their methods are in obtaining opinions from minority groups?

Ineffective	1	17
	2	14
	3	34
	4	4

Effective		5	6
-----------	--	---	---

12. Do you feel any of these groups has more or less influence than others on Merton planning matters?

Youth	less	1	19
		2	15
		3	20
		4	5
	more	5	7

Elderly	less	1	16
		2	24
		3	14
		4	13
	more	5	1

Ethnic Minorities	less	1	9
		2	10
		3	20
		4	14
	more	5	4

Disabled	less	1	13
		2	13
		3	16
		4	15
	more	5	1

13. Do you remember the September 1998 leaflet and survey that asked for opinions on major planning issues in Merton?

Yes	64
No	25

Did it cover the main issues related to you?

Yes	41
No	17

Did you like this form of leaflet?

Yes	25
No	9

Was it easy to understand?

Yes	49
No	7

Was it specific enough?

Yes	22
No	29

14. Through what methods would you like Merton Council to provide feedback from the 1998 survey?

1. television	6
2. letters	49
3. radio	8
4. newspaper	68
5. internet posting	20
6. postal pamphlet	53
7. borough meetings	23
8. libraries	43
9. other	6

15. Do you think Merton Council made an honest effort to obtain your views and opinions on planning matter through the September 1998 consultation?

Yes	49
No	24

16. Do you think the Council took account of your views on planning after you responded to the September 1998 survey “Towards Merton in 2011”?

Yes	19
No	27

17. Did Merton Council provide easily obtainable results from this survey?

Yes	20
No	48

18. Did you see the report: “UDP Deposit Draft Statement of Publicity and Consultation,” published in September 1999, which reported the results of the September 1998 survey?

Yes	25
No	60

19. How much do you value the “WPI: Planning Consultation Survey”?

Do Not Value	1	3
	2	12
	3	23
	4	15
Highly Value	5	15

20. What type of feedback would you like with regards to the results of the survey?

1. television	2
2. letters	49
3. radio	3
4. newspaper	54

5. internet postings	12
6. postal pamphlets	51
7. borough meetings	14
8. libraries	39
9. other	4

Age Bracket:

Under 20	4
20-40	15
40-60	43
Over 60	44

(Extended comments can be found in Appendix H)

Appendix F Thank You Letter

PLANNING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION DIVISION

Head of Planning and Public Protection - Steve Clark

date: 8 March, 2000
my ref: ES/PP/SC/WPI
please ask for: John Gleeson/Brian Papagni/Emily Reynolds
your ref: 0181-545-3063

**London Borough of Merton
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden, Surrey SM4 5DX
DX 41650 Morden**

*Switchboard: 0181-543-2222
Minicom: 0181-545-3245
Telex: 893062
Fax: 0181-545-3326
Direct Line: 0181-545-3060*

WPI: BEST VALUE CONSULTATION PROJECT FEBRUARY 2000

Dear Participant,

We would like to thank you for your contribution in our study for Merton Council. We have taken into account your views and thoughts in making recommendations to Merton in order to provide for an improved consultation process. We received 97 out of the 168 surveys back, and have completed our research based on these responses.

Outlined below are several of our findings upon which we based our recommendations. A copy of our extensive report can be found in each of the local libraries by early March. The report can be found under the title "Merton UDP, WPI: Best Value Consultation Project, March 2000." We will be giving a formal presentation of our results at the Merton Civic Centre on 1 March 2000 at 12:00 in the Council Chamber Room, in which you are invited to attend.

Participation

- Most residents stated they participated twice yearly and only when approached.
- 73% of respondents rated their participation as average to below average.

Consultation

- 74% of respondents preferred post surveys as a method of future consultation.

Feedback

- Most respondents favoured feedback through newspapers, postal pamphlets, and letters.

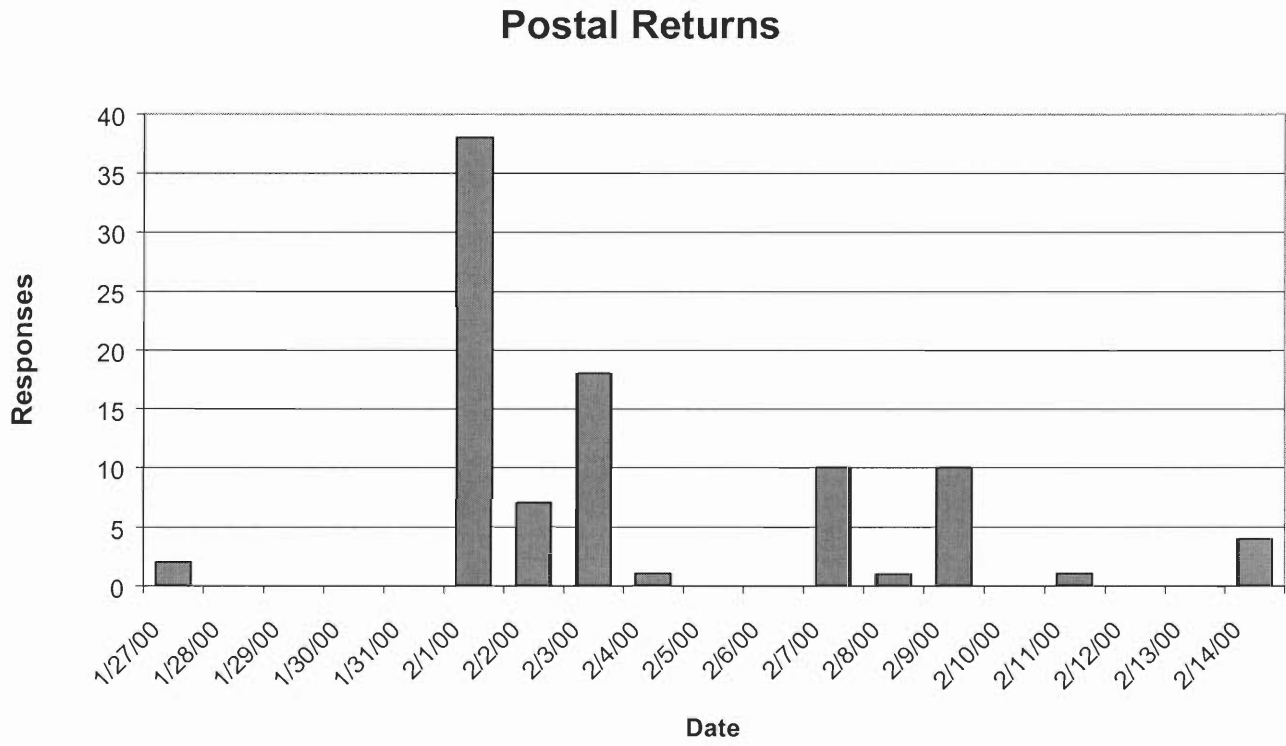
Council Approval

- 81% of respondents gave Merton Council a rating of average or below average on their understanding of the public's views in planning.
- Past consultations were commonly seen as ineffective, and too general in their nature.

Once again, we thank you for contributing to our study for Merton.

Yours sincerely,
John Gleeson
Brian Papagni
Emily Reynolds

Appendix G
Graph of Postal Returns



Appendix H

Written Comments from Surveys

****Each bulleted item indicates a response to the previous question from one individual.****

Question 1: How would you rate your participation with Merton Council?

- Dictate that we respond, consultation on library closures in our area was non-existent, little feedback from technical letters, no action

Question 2: How frequently do you participate in Merton?

- I vote at election always
- Through Residents Meetings
- Not very often, wrote to councillors, seems to be little action.
- Quarterly
- Only if issues interest me
- Depends on issue

Question 3: What forms of participation apply to your involvement with Merton planning in the last year?

- Planning Committee-Wimbledon
- Council Meetings
- Residents' meetings
- Planning matters
- None
- Petitions
- Residents meeting
- Committee NWW Residents Association
- Residents meetings
- Meeting with local M.P.
- Meetings with street management staff
- Discuss with local MP
- Public meetings with Council Reps
- CAAC meetings
- Residents association
- Have very active Resident's Association and we meet once a month to discuss Council matters.
- None, other than reply to UDP consultation
- UDP comments
- Planning subcommittee to object to neighbours proposed new building
- Only questionnaire
- Submitting a petition against a particular planning item, and attending a public inquiry
- Running exhibitions at libraries.
- Residents meetings, speaking at planning meetings in opposition to developers plans

- Local working parties/ charity involvement/ local schools
- Planning matters
- WE call public meetings via Raynes Park and West Barnes Residents Association.

Question 4: What are some of your reasons for using these methods to participate?

- Resident Association Member
- Fighting for our community
- Loves Merton
- Best way to put forward my views having listened at meetings and writing to those concerned
- Residents' meetings are the most effective
- Environmental matters
- Not involved
- Important to make the effort, if only in a very small way
- To try to influence decisions – by writing letters
- Election agent
- Council should know opinion of voters
- Disagreed with closures of schools and libraries
- Thought my voice would be heard
- To get something done
- Annoyance at council's poor decisions
- Education
- As chairman of a local residents association
- The issues discussed had direct effect on my concerns
- An interest in the environment
- Town planning matters
- Partly to do with work and partly for personal interest
- Residents Association
- Not involved in local government. Involved because of development in our location, founded because council officer's will not talk constructively to the developer.
- Concerns about protection of open space and wildlife.
- Strong objections to many foolish traffic control measures
- Until recently, essential to get facts
- To support/ oppose particular planning items
- The subject interested me and the consequences have a direct affect on me and my family
- Transport matter-displayed at bus stop
- To TRY and put a point across.
- Developing tourism in the borough
- Being the largest employer in borough therefore encourage links with community
- Wanted my views to be heard

- Writing letters because Council HADN'T made approaches on issues
- Because the council tries to make decisions without adequate consultation.

Question 5: In the future, what types of consultation would you most likely respond to regarding planning matters in Merton?

- None
- notices in local papers
- Strength of experience with library closures; would not bother again
- None
- Internet/ email
- Anything that interested me
- Residents meeting
- Only the loudest views are heard, need house to house questionnaires
- Email
- Meetings with staff
- In the past there has been insufficient consultation
- Statutory consultation, planning applications
- Presentations by officials particularly to residents groups
- With Councillors at Residents Association meetings
- Focus groups and local area meetings, unless issue is borough wide
- Attending a public inquiry
- Talking to Councillors
- Public meetings with council decision-makers.

Question 6: Which of the following people do you think should make decisions involving planning?

- Voluntary organisations
- People affected by decision
- Experts in particular field and those affected
- Residents Association
- Advice only
- Many planning permissions should be open to question 5 above
- Only after public consultations via house to house surveys
- Appropriate Council bodies
- Panel comprising mixture of above
- Central government
- Residents Associations
- Local Residents Associations should be consulted
- Council officers on a national consideration basis, residents elect councillors to over see this, and maintain the quality of service to each individual ward, conclude-Merton has Not provided good service. Sutton, Kingston, Croydon, are far more vibrant economically than Merton. It is pointless talking about value for money and no action

- If officers are qualified, should develop proposals after liaison with local groups, then put through council process. Majority of councillors have not intelligence or insight to properly deal with planning matters
- Businesses Forum
- Greater London Authority
- Residents affected

Question 7: How well do you feel Merton Council informs you on planning issues?

- Attends residents association meetings, information from officers presentations
- It is all rather remote. Use local newspaper more frequently.
- Newspaper, Merton Messenger
- Too much left to the individual to find out, though items appear in the local paper, leaflets sometimes arrive
- Merton has been known to mislead, confuse, and cover up.
- Only heard about it in the library, planning, and sometimes newspaper
- Libraries, and newspaper
- There is usually information available in public libraries.
- Most of my info via councillors at residents association meetings (monthly), local newspapers and Merton's leaflets
- Major decisions seem to be taken between council and developers with public left to decide the colour of the paint.
- Sending letters to people who might be affected by planning issues
- Not at all
- Information is often displayed in the library or Centre Court; not always clear to understand; maps and diagrams are often confusing
- On some issues, well informed of plans initially – subsequently often abandoned with no information at all.
- We're informed as far as it is necessary. Local community groups have needed to be increasingly aware of information. Planning is Not made public.
- Occasionally see issues mentioned in local paper or in the local library
- Although I read local paper, do not always see vital information
- Very little information is published in the local paper- one has to study notices put up in libraries
- Sometimes residents near to a planning application are not notified
- Newspapers are main sources of information
- I sometimes feel that decisions are made and then we are offered a "SOP"
- To make us feel involved. I work in Wimbledon and am affected by the building work and general chaos at present. I feel I did not have enough 'say' in what is being built there.
- Only see such items in our local 'freebie' newspaper—The Guardian
- The mess Merton has made of Wimbledon has mostly 'come out of the blue.'
- Response to letters is intelligent

- An instance would be lack of suggested plans at local library (colliers wood) instead of Mitcham
- Average resident is unaware of major planning projects. Only minor works appear in the press
- Sometimes seems that buildings are put up, trees removed, etc. without any prior information
- On issues affecting my specific area
- Periodic ‘glossy stuff’ on proposals, the detail is lacking
- Neighbouring planning associations are regularly received, notices in local free press, plans at library, important documents given to interest groups, improvements made in informing general public
- Difficult to know, only get to know what they want you to know; how much is in the overall plan?
- The UDP is the only document. Even when residents views are taken into account by the Councillors on the relevant Committee, it would seem that officers carry on with their own personal policy.
- Merton notified me of consultation stage of UDP.
- Maps and letters show what is planned, but does not answer questions
- I have never been informed about any planning issues in Merton
- Final planning decisions are made by the dominant party in caucus, this is wrong, the facts should be public.
- In the worst case, not answering specific questions or dodging the issue.
- Directly misleading with false information
- The plans are too expensive to buy and it isn’t often possible to go to Crown House to look
- Local papers carry information, Merton Messenger available
- Local paper
- I feel that they do their best, but the issues are complicated, and can’t force how things actually turn out, they get blamed, i.e. the cycle track issue
- Improving with exhibitions, public meetings etc. Newsletters similar to Wandsworth Councils “Brightside” would be of benefit to keep residents informed of planning applications, approvals, planning schemes under development, etc.
- Depends on issues, how it affects the borough and who it affects, there are set procedures to follow laid down by legislation. On large issues, Merton is quite good on more local issues, less so.
- No better nor worse than other organisations
- Residents feel that if planning want something to get through – it is not mentioned until it is too late for appeal.
- Local plans Not in local libraries (Colliers Wood) very difficult to find any details
- Attention notices are insufficient and do not cause sufficient attention. Big planning issues should be better publicised, for example in the ‘Merton Messenger’
- We are consulted regarding the UDP

- More convenient if planning issues particularly major ones were more detailed in the local paper which is well read, and nearer to front of paper
- UDP was good example- other times especially roadwork's there is no communication at all.
- We have a proposed development a block away, but the council has failed to give us information even after writing letters. A 'don't know' would be better than nothing.
- Informed on specific matters. The general policy issues sometimes are not clear and/or don't get implemented in intended way.
- Letters are sent to residents; public notices appear in the Guardian; street notices are affixed to notify of plans and request comments; library has plans, displays, sometimes even hotels.
- When disputed applications are eventually approved, objections are NOT informed and have no rights of appeal (unlike applicants)
- Prominent displays in libraries and at Crown House
- They try to make politically correct decisions behind our backs which are not always good for the community.

Question 8: Through what methods do you obtain information concerning Merton Council planning activities?

- Residents Associations
- Encountering building and construction activities when in borough
- Planning Committee-Wimbledon
- Wimbledon Society
- Residents association meetings and information from ward councillor
- Residents meetings
- Taxi drivers
- When pressed, council officers will attend meetings
- Primarily the residents magazine
- CAAC Agenda
- Info from my local residents association
- Via RP and WBR Association
- Locally letters, newspapers and word of mouth from other resident's associations.
- Residents' association, other residents, London Wildlife Trust
- Letters if directly affected, and should be expanded to include larger area than only adjoining sites to proposed development, at libraries parking is difficult (town hall)
- Forums (w/ society, w/ forum)
- Contact with offices/ meetings with members
- Talking to various councillors and others.
- Local Amenity Association (John Innes Society)
- Business meetings
- Conservation areas consultative Committee
- Borough contacts

- Store colleagues/ employees
- Street notices
- ‘Chasing up’ planning notifications
- Yellow planning notices physically displayed (although not always displayed)
- Weekly list of applications, consultation on planning applications
- Word of mouth

Question 9: Which do you value more, the quality or the cost of planning services in Merton?

- Health and safety need to be balanced by low council tax
- Don’t fully understand this question
- There is not enough money in Merton for high quality.
- I don’t agree that these are tied. I value the quality the most.
- High cost need not mean high quality
- The development in recent years in Wimbledon Town Centre has been very unattractive.
- High quality at a reasonable charge. Advocate a middle road approach
- Charge applicants/developers MUCH higher fees

Question 10: Do you think Merton Council understands what you want in planning?

- More open meetings with public to improve understanding and inform Merton Council of planning preferences
- There should be more detailed information sent out, instead of us seeking it.
- I don’t know. There is a new town centre being built, and it just seems like a prestige project without benefit or improvements to the area. There are some bad litter problems, much is left to volunteers.
- Recruit higher calibre, more trustworthy senior officers.
- Surveys/ Votes
- Forever to happen; meetings about meetings; appeal to ‘normal people’
- There may be simpler ways of finding out what people really want for the future. Some documentation is daunting to the ordinary citizen.
- Mobile phone masts- no land use policy for these dangerous structures; high density housing in crowded area; more consultation, focus groups
- Experience of past years; actually listen, not pay ‘lip service’ to ideas
- They may understand, but big money talks (big developers). Special meetings with residents or amenity (conservation) groups.
- What consultation was there for the ‘road or pavement improvement scheme’ along the Broadway? Clear information in libraries and local newspapers.
- Because the planning department is only open Monday – Friday during office hours – I find participation difficult. I do not usually have a local Guardian newspaper delivered and have to read it at the libraries which do not have any of the inserts with the paper.
- I have been involved with roads and transport. I don’t think the council employees have been keen to fully understand suggestions or new ways of thinking about planning problems

- Takes its UDP seriously and resists undermining it
- The public are sometimes consulted and then their opinions are ignored. LISTEN to residents.
- Merton does not ask for opinions. Letters should be sent out to residents. Councillors could hold local meetings to discuss relevant issues with the people they represent. I have never met my ward councillor, do not know anything about him/her or their policies.
- Missed several opportunities in redeveloping the centre of Wimbledon; Town hall is essential for this thriving community. They have not been listening to public opinion.
- Thinking is linked more with the cost than the benefits achieved; build up a complete case for any improvement; only then start to obtain a reasonable costing for the project
- Not enough attention is paid to the effect of large extensions which alter the style of houses in the area. Allowing alteration to use of garages which means more parking on streets. This practice should not be allowed on planning applications.
- Problems characteristic of Wimbledon (as opposed to Mitcham) not always appreciated; Set-up district forums
- Keeping us late payers informed
- The way it has produced plans and schemes, no one wants Wimbledon with poor cohesive 'look,' and the way it doesn't implement schemes like parking restrictions. Stop taking backhanders, and SERVE the community
- Chairman was rude to people speaking against the proposed plans at a planning meeting. Change should be made in the chairman of the present planning sub committee.
- Only if it goes through the right consultation process; more house to house secret ballot and consultation, planning decisions reached based on those findings
- The Council are too timid in trying to avoid possibility of appeal, more robust approach
- Seems not to be always fully understood judging by some results. More information to the public earlier on what is intended and taking into account more what the public say.
- Not yet convinced either way, made aware of issues by mail drop, not done consistently although it has happened on occasion
- No better or more than any other London borough I've lived in
- Difficult to judge, given the gulf between understanding and reacting
- Officers do make note of objections and make informed presentations and briefings to councillors More communication through residents groups, not a member, but rely on it to keep me informed. Volunteers are making more effort than they need to gather info.
- They do try. Planning side includes audits and public consultation at times. Application of results and opinion surveys is not usually thought though; ask for in depth questions, in case of ethnic minority issues and preferences

- Insufficient consultation with the Rate Payers (the residents throughout Merton)
- Merton gives me planning hassle while allowing many disruptive schemes early. A less subjective, more rate based system might seem fairer.
- No. I think I've covered this previously
- Abysmal quality and design of buildings in Wimbledon Town Centre, rest of new buildings are poor quality. Should be highly qualified director of planning. Advice was ignored, cheap shoddy buildings, Sites should have been open to architectural competition
- Invite to specific meetings
- People are not given any consultation in planning conditions; Have more posters, leaflets about future developments
- Aware I want more openness in planning decisions. Areas of need should have 'assets' built up, also want more architectural input and UDP requirements in presentation of MOL, and sustainability criteria
- Understanding very well the majority of peoples' opinions and completely ignoring them. Incorporate peoples' opinions in the decision making process.
- I always feel we know more about the plans once they have been put into action, we should know all the facts, should be made available in the Wimbledon newspaper, section at the front page alerting readers to contents, as to what's inside the planning section- only highlight important changes.
- Councillors should be more proactive in informing and listening to people
- Not enough contact with residents
- The Council has a fair understanding, but the trouble is that important decisions are often taken by Council officials, who are unelected and don't necessarily live in the borough. This causes resentment, public gets lauded with developments that have a detrimental effect on houses and environment, flats not houses built, road schemes, parking restrictions, meaning of 'consultation' i.e., reference to what people want, only to dismiss views?
- Can only be gauged by actions it takes- the feedback is less affective than the consultation; Ensure that in the case of major initiatives consultation is asked for, that the decisions taken are properly explained through media as leaflets.
- Tramlink, no moves to extend existing bus services. Sutton Council appears to work with transport organisations more than Merton
- They do what they think should apply – despite forums or so called consultation with the public. Go out and listen to the public.
- Listen to and implement suggestions of local people. Stop sucking-up to developers. They do not live in Merton-we do.
- By and large the Council have got planning matters right so far. Better publicity regarding the environmental impact of large developments, especially in town centres.
- No real communication, talk to businesses
- I feel that the Council does not listen sufficiently to local opinions.
- It is difficult to get a large representative opinion

- Lack of contact from Council, Make a decision about Town Centre, management in Colliers Wood. Issue has been debated for 18 months. Then local businesses/ community engaged.
- Low quality officers make poor recommendations; do not reflect what the community wants as they do not live in the area; this applies also to Colliers who do not live in the area but are making decisions. Take more notice of the views from highly respected and qualified amenity groups and local opinion.
- Difficult to judge
- Too much development in the retail sector. More consultation, more attention to environmental concerns
- Lip service paid to 'sustainability', but doubt council's understanding is the same as mine. Real problem is that local authorities do not have the resources or responsibility to stand up to property developers-
- Most comments seem to be ignored, the usual excuse is lack of money
- Have always had courteous and intelligent response to my frequent letters. Suggest Council taxpayers read the information provided and consider social and economic well-being of community, instead of complaining when any change of policy affects their selfish concerns.
- Whole system is weighted massively in favour of applicants/developers- residents who have very genuine reasons to object to bad applications must have stronger rights- at least as strong as applicants.
- Gains a view from comments at meetings. Suggest more regularly issued focus meetings.
- They only know too well. Unfortunately, they cry poverty instead of doing much about the human need. (Inaction in securing a site for Wimbledon Football Club)
- They try to force inept and unnecessary solutions which are opposed by the community. Most of the council officers do not even reside in our borough, and they do not care or understand.

Question 11: In the Council's efforts to obtain resident views on planning, how effectively do you think their methods are in obtaining opinions from minority groups?

- More open meetings; communication
- Don't know
- Surveys targeting those groups
- Minorities- too much attention
- Keep it straightforward and simple.
- Same as Question 10
- Big publicity for popular plan- minimal for deal with big developer which is unpopular.
- No opinion
- Decisions are made across the entire borough, but minority groups are usually from any one small area in the borough.
- Need to consult with local groups over local issues

- Difficult to say- it really rests on the minority groups showing more interest
- How important are minority groups in a democracy? Majority rules. Opinion gathering by the council, though, which should be conducted, is not obvious.
- If the process outlined above (door-to door consultation) is exercised
- More consultation with residents associations with more regard to their views
- Initiations to the general public to participate should be more widely advertised
- Try to reach the silent majority
- We don't know, We consider that we are members of a majority group and we have problems. I would think that groups of residents from other countries probably have similar problems in planning.
- Series of planning groups by architect/planner, aimed at quality and good design
- Publish minutes in local paper
- Don't just ask people from small minority areas, people who live in minority areas (Brixton) are entitled to a say as well
- More openness required in planning decisions
- More contact with minority groups
- An analysis of the minority groups, and a random sample used from each to ascertain their needs
- I am not in a minority group and am not conscious of any deliberate policy either way however, generally the elderly have more to say than youngsters and there are many of them in the area where I live
- Councillors should knock on doors – and find out for themselves and not listen to executive staff, who perhaps do not even live in Merton.
- It's the majority groups that loose out in favour of the various minorities.
- Not sure how effective, but probably less effective than for the average public. Again using the local paper would be good practice
- Set agenda for local forums including improved fieldwork/survey
- If it applies to an ethnic group then all documents or direct communication should be via the same culture or language.
- More time allowed to respond.
- Minority groups are ignored.
- Consult more widely, scrap "8 week turnaround" objective, and reply to all letters especially when decisions are made.

Question 12: Do you feel any of these groups has more or less influence than others on Merton planning matters? (youth, elderly, ethnic minorities, disabled)

- Since we can't vote the council doesn't really pay attention to what we have to say.
- I cannot answer this question. I have no means of knowing.
- Don't know about this
- Mitcham councillors get too much say and influence.
- Nobody gets a good representation.
- As I explained I feel that the Council decided first and then asked us- not

- necessarily taking note of what we say
- I cannot comment on this question. How does one know without inside knowledge of Council
- None should have more or less influence than the individual, I organised elements of these ‘groups’ probably do.
- There is no consultation other than the UDP. Very poor youth amenities, help for elderly, socially is minimal. Disabled access not more than minimal, closure of local library—‘it is for the good of the wider community’, difficult to explain to a resident who has a genuine need for these services.
- Depends on participation with local interest groups. In poorer areas of Merton, groups may be less organised, these councillors should ensure consultation takes place at local meetings
- Parking restrictions, and poor travel services are making life difficult for the elderly, but never hear them mentioned when planning decisions are made.
- Vested interest, the wealthy, and the well-connected get too much influence.

Question 13: Do you remember the September 1998 leaflet and survey that asked for opinions on major planning issues in Merton? Did it cover the main issues? Was it easy to understand? Was it specific enough?

- It was all too general
- There is a lot of good discussion, good ideas, and there is quite a lot of good activity. Many things get done, and we win environmental prizes.
- The survey was “loaded” – questions were not discriminating enough. Questions should have been divided and separated into the separate issues.
- Consultation one thing, response another
- It seemed a very poorly written document which asked very few questions and appeared biased in the way questions were asked.
- Difficult to get a hold of this – library copy out and not always accessible
- It was worded in such a vague, unclear, manner that you could often read into it the opposite meaning than that intended
- It sought flip answers to complex questions i.e. “The plan should encourage more evening leisure activities in Wimbledon” What does this mean?
- I think incoming property developers should attend residents meetings
- Leaflet was only obtainable from libraries and similar places; Most were not even aware of the leaflet
- Overall thought the UDP was excellent. Think that as few houses as possible are built on open green spaces. Town Centres are improved and made pedestrian friendly, and that green areas are preserved.
- Some statements we were asked to agree or disagree with raised questions about the way the answers would be interpreted/exploited. For example, the sports grounds issue gave no opportunity to say that open space is never wasted if under used.
- It must have made some impression as I obtained a copy of the borough UDP
- It was oversimplified to the point of childishness

- Information could be targeted at specific areas, i.e., conservation areas, more interested in Wimbledon
- It is hard to make a pamphlet, in general, so this one was pretty good. However, it catered to the general public.
- Not specific enough
- There are four questions inconsistent with remainder of document.
- I think it could have asked more detailed questions in order to better understand the reasons behind the answers
- I want to know what is proposed in planning, and honesty about future follow-ups. There is too much fudging of information.
- Far too generalised

Question 14: Through what methods would you like Merton Council to provide feedback from the 1998 survey?

- Letters-with council tax demand
- Meetings with residents, and amenity groups
- Television would be too expensive, and a waste of my local taxes.
- Local Newspaper
- Residents meeting
- Email
- Leaflets through letter boxes (whichever is the cheapest)
- Posters in public places
- Merton Messenger
- Local meetings, Merton Messenger and libraries, might not trust opinion of newspapers
- Local meetings, Town hall is terrible to visit-not much parking
- Advice to Wimbledon Society and Wimbledon Forum
- So long as it is mentioned in a news summary on front page and not within
- Residents Meetings
- Cut down on all the posters in public places and use the space for more important issues.
- Stands in high profile/footfall businesses
- Mail but with Council tax demand (saves on postage)

Question 15: Do you think Merton Council made an honest effort to obtain your views and opinions on planning matters through the September 1998 consultation?

- Vague, leading questions
- Probably, I don't know what was left out.
- Survey was not discriminating in its questions.
- Loads of paperwork
- If I hadn't gone to the library I wouldn't have heard about it
- Very general inquiries – people are busy, just don't have time to digest and respond
- There were few forms printed – they were not distributed.

- This depends on what was done with the responses.
- I doubt it, they don't do so in any other area.
- We have no way of knowing whether it was just a gesture or if they took any notice.
- Always difficult to hear about the survey, and then find the necessary document and questionnaire
- Massive 'tomes' were provided in the library that no 'lay-man' could honestly digest- also various points cross-referenced and appeared to contradict each other
- No- it was a pre-exercise
- A reported meeting where a council rep said "we are required by law to listen to your thoughts, but we don't have to take any notice."
- There is a lack of information by the council on many matters
- But only my opinions and a small minority who happened to hear of it
- Perhaps, but the relevant issue is the account taken of those opinions
- They probably intended going ahead with their plans anyway and the survey was just superficial
- But limited
- I remember co-incidentally going into the reference library (Wimbledon) and noticing the display
- Not interested
- I would have preferred more individual consultation, but maybe this isn't possible, it would be costly
- We take an active interest in local developments in Colliers Wood, Merton Council are evasive even when asked a direct questions
- If you visit the 12th floor one could learn more – but how often do the public use the 12th floor.
- Not sure
- But that failed
- Any effort which involved expenditures are ignored
- Not in detail like this survey

Question 16: Do you think the Council took account of your views on planning after you responded to the September 1998 survey "Towards Merton in 2011?"

- No feedback from council to answer this question.
- The exercise appeared to be "lip service" – there was a prior agenda
- Doubts Council takes account of views
- Money talks the loudest
- No way of knowing whether decisions taken in any way reflect views given
- Although response is asked, much of the detail of that comment is not noted
- For 10 years we have been interested in a Town Hall. General issues like a larger library, for the community.
- Specifically on the proposed changes of traffic flow in this West area
- My views weren't specifically at odds with the plan

- UDP 1999 did not adhere to residents association comment regarding MOL in the borough.
- Certainly the plan reflects many of my views. However, as that document itself admits, some of its policies are in conflict
- They never gave me any feedback
- I have been sent a survey from you to broaden my views
- They would be mistaken not to take account of my reservations at PARA. Prejudices have to be overcome
- My views were incorporated in the subsequent report
- I have faith in local democracy
- I am not sure
- Unclear as next stage of was publication of the UDP deposit draft
- If only because I am not aware of any “green” areas being re-developed, most development appears on “brown” sites, it could be No if you look at Morden and the lack of development there
- Decisions are made in many cases before consultation takes place
- I have seen no changes – only traffic lights.
- I don’t know, was not a simplified summary produced. Leaflet similar size to the consultation leaflet would have been appreciated and indicating areas where the council changed its views as a consequence of the public consultation
- Too generalised

Question 17: Did Merton Council provide easily obtainable results from this survey?

- Was it published to the public?
- I did not see them – though may have missed them – I use the libraries often.
- If they did, I didn’t get or hear about the results.
- Where are the results shown?
- Again you had to attempt to find information
- Obtained by local residents association and ‘deciphered’ by them
- Results were not publicised
- Not aware of them.
- Saw no results of survey
- I may personally have missed the results. Have not seen any.
- These had to be searched for and requested
- Cannot afford the draft of the UDP (have old one)
- For further info had to go to library or town hall
- Was not particularly looking for them
- Available from libraries if people are interested
- How often has one the time to sort out all the information that is lying around to find out what interests you?
- Can’t remember seeing any
- Nothing seen

Question 18: Did you see the report: “UDP Deposit Draft Statement of Publicity and Consultation,” published in September 1999, which reported the results of the September 1998 survey?

- Library, and purchased from council
- Too difficult to understand for layman, lots of jargon
- Residents association meetings
- Wimbledon Society- Wandle Heritage Library
- Library
- Not surprising with a title like that!!
- Library; only three copies, always out on loan, such a vast document, nearly impossible to read it all at the library
- Wimbledon library and Morden Library
- From NWW resident’s association
- Library. Perhaps a more ‘snappy’ title would register more?
- Library.
- Do not recall publication advertised, bought a copy of the UDP
- Morden Library.
- Report posted to me.
- Library.
- Acquired from planning dept.
- At work it happens that there are reports sent to the office I work at
- 12th floor Merton Civic Centre
- Sent to us
- Mitcham Library
- Local community group
- Library
- Wimbledon Library
- Wimbledon Library
- Residents association

Question 19: How much do you value the “WPI : Planning Consultation Survey?”

- Depends on whether any attention is paid to it by Merton.
- I just wonder whether this survey will make any difference to Council decisions
- Consider this an opportunity to reply. Questionnaire is flawed. Questions do not cover the whole situation. Library closure issue, survey did not ask.

Question 20: What type of feedback would you like with regards to the results of this survey?

- Results sent to amenity groups
- Residents meetings
- Our library is closing!! Can’t get information there.
- Residents associations
- Posters in public places

- Merton Messenger
- I am sure the results of the survey will be discussed at RP and WB Resident's Association monthly meetings
- Letter, Merton Messenger, but that could be propaganda. Most Merton committee agendas and minutes are very repetitive. Needs problem solution and conclusion, not perpetual repeating of problem and solution. Internet should be used. When each household has an email address and is connected via the television it will be an ideal medium.
- Details to Wimbledon Society and Wimbledon Forum
- Local Guardian free paper covers most of borough
- By post personally
- Residents Meetings

Other Comments

- Many people criticise, but few want to get involved, as most haven't the time or feel they have enough influence. Internet will be a good method of information in the future.
- Account for Public feeling and experts opinion before sale of land
- More notice should be given of forthcoming planning meetings. Longer and more widely disseminated information should be available. Members should have a "right to reply" at public meetings. Currently members of public have one 3- minute "slot" to raise points and ask questions – if their points are misrepresented or not addressed, there is no provision for the members of the public to point this out. Senior planning officers should be more accountable to the public, recognising that the public is their employer and their customer. Chairman of Planning Committee should have a limited term of office.
- Info so we can contest/disagree; if we want to set up meetings; something happening in particular area, informing the people who live in area by post; encouraging people to take part in surveys, how it will benefit them
- Keep simple; don't patronise; rid of elitist image; don't appeal to minorities; also not just Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden too
- I think that at public places – Civic Centre/libraries people could be asked to read and sign simple notices regarding planning. Also I consider all the planning too generalised. People may want to know the specifics. There is no statement about providing future basic civilised facilities/ toilets etc. Woefully lacking at present in our neighbourhood centres.
- Needs to be targeted as well as a general invitation to comment; little yellow planning notices are always unreadable and short time for comments
- Necessary to demonstrate that public opinion influences planning, otherwise it is just a waste of time and money
- Bitterly disappointed and disheartened by their recent attitude; Library closures made a mockery of any real participation policy; Merton Council Majority will do exactly as they decide regardless of public opinion
- Local meetings are best where views can be discussed among one's friends and neighbours with councillors present.

- Good newspaper- The Guardian, not delivered to every home, the Merton Messenger is not so good at providing info, and is not produced very often
- Organising referendums, Internet, info obtained from library, leisure centres, schools, post system
- I have the impression that Merton does not want much public participation on planning or other issues unless they are forced to consult. Suggestions: Publicise meetings properly – up to date list outside Crown House, or borough boards in libraries and in Merton Messenger. Provide facilities for obtaining copies of agenda BEFORE meetings available at times convenient for people who work. Hold more public meetings and EXPLAIN planning policies.
- Local forum meetings on specific issues. Do as much of the planning work as possible within an open style of local government so that reasons why things can't be done can be openly and properly disclosed. Everyone concerned with particular local planning issues should be consulted, as they may have more commitment and energy to work on particular issues, and why not harness this commitment and energy as effectively as possible.
- If the council paid any attention to public opinion, they would get more input from the public. Better manners at public meetings would help.
- So much junk mail, many residents refuse to have 'free newspapers', about 1% of local residents turn up at our regular meetings, not everyone uses public libraries, Leaves: door-to-door canvassing, public meetings on a more 'local' area basis
- Councillors are able to listen to complaints and do their best to help. More feedback is needed from the Borough officers. It is to be hoped that better bus services will be provided. There are long waits and few buses; difficult for elderly and those without cars.
- Survey questionnaires need to be more specifically oriented to localities in the borough
- When we hold a residents meeting it would be good if a council member could be present so that we could have face to face discussion
- More rubbish bins in town centre, mouthy cyclists banned from pavement cycling, dog warden's to fine owners who let dogs foul pavement, and dog dirt cleaned.
- The problem is that Merton has a bad reputation and many believe that no matter what they say Merton will do what it wants. The mess of Wimbledon station seems to have been a surprise to most, so people don't see why they should bother. Merton should keep people better informed on decisions, rather than, it seems, leave it all to gossip and rumour.
- Apathy about council matters. Many people do not bother to race in council elections
- Make more use of existing bodies, i.e.. Conservation Area Advisory Committee and the Environmental Forum.
- I feel public opinion is obtained adequately enough, but possibly not always acted upon.
- Obtaining public opinion is one thing; taking it into account is another. Residents like to know the reasons for decisions and an explanation. I have

had contact with the planning department in connection with work done on my property. Every person I spoke to gave me a different answer.

- Need to combat a widely held view that “what does it matter what we say ‘they’ always do as ‘they’ like,” and that, “reasoned argument seldom prevails over political will.”
- The Council might give greater incentives to developers to organise local public meeting and make sure developers are informed of the need to Listen.
- Since 1951 I have noticed a gradual decline in the Council services in Merton. Since present council has been in control, conditions in borough have seriously deteriorated. General appearance of Merton is a disgrace with large cut-backs in street cleaning. Failed to listen on cycle track in Leombe Lane which we feel is a hazard.
- Should be doing volunteer work instead of this.
- You have all the media to contact residents, Merton Messenger, libraries, public meetings, It is the presentation. It is a need to instil a sense of commitment and determination to succeed. Not dreary news and complacency.
- Much greater attention should be paid to consulting residents associations (which are ignored in this survey) and taking their views seriously. The Council does pay some attention, but I would like to see more.
- Best are the local meetings for public opinion.
- Set up workshops i.e., week at a time where architect/planners encourage locals to visit and give their suggestions
- Merton in 2011 needs to be specific, i.e.. What centre? Planning to create centres and access to same
- I think that if the Council is going to plan a development they should consult people with their plans and ask for suggestions from the public
- The development of UDP is a result of enormous public and governmental consultation. Implementation and finance is the key. To arrival of these miracles by ‘openness’ with the public as to the facts of major planning decisions.
- Always incorporate the majority of peoples’ opinions in the decision-making process. Failure causes- 1) not participating in future or 2) group together in protest and advertise their despondency through petitions/demonstrations
- Please let us not have any more restaurants, bars, pubs in Wimbledon, tacky, big signs lower the tone of neighbourhood, what is actually happening on the Hatfield rd. car path site?
- Would like to express appreciation of Council, 1) whenever one phones the Council, the response is always courteous and helpful 2) some of the departments are manned by people who really care about their work and this comes through, Those in Environmental Services Dept, anything to do with wild-life, are invariably caring and enthusiastic and act promptly on peoples concerns. This applies to the Free Offices as well, over worked though they are, Personal services dept, show similar enthusiasm and have a caring

attitude. We've lived in Merton over 40 years and have come in contact with the Council a good deal.

- Do not 'fudge' questions, keep the residents aware of planned projects by newsletters, open libraries, etc. A site displayed in the post provides little comfort. An explanation of when major scheme comes out of the ground.
- A lot of consultation is aimed at specific planning applications and this appears to work. On wider issues of the UDP it has to be linked to the whole sustainable development aspects, social issues, employment considerations, welfare and education, etc. The public will have a view on these if they understand how they are related. In any survey, ensure they are understood, decisions explained in such a way that the community understands how these issues considered, and relative importance given to them.
- Public transport- serious thought needs to be given to better multi-route links to Morden from Mitcham. Other areas of planning would be to strengthen links with Sutton in respect of recycling and waste disposal. Joint contracts could save money. Library service linked to Sutton could also yield savings.
- We elect councillors to represent us – not faceless people who run so many various departments – and think they know best. Merton Council have been in power 9 years – and Morden is in a worse state than it ever was.
- Plans must be made available in Colliers Wood library. Requested many times over many years but have been ignored
- I suggest that the Town Forum meetings could be held periodically on the lines of the recent initiative of the MP of Wimbledon
- This is a good 'first attempt' I hope it is successful
- I believe the local newspaper is a good place to inform and ask public about planning. Delivered to most houses in borough and I know it is well read and widely read, having spoken to many people in the three places I work in Mitcham
- Local free newspapers are good, but tend to be reactive, not proactive. Communication needs to be handled differently to improve penetration.
- Opinions through public meetings never seem to alter policy. Labour Group makes the policy usually before the public voices their opinion. Obstinate Councillors are unwilling to change bad policy to use lateral thinking when trying to resolve an unpopular decision,... libraries, PPP for schools, cycle paths. Public view should be paramount in decision making.
- More time should be allowed for response. Also, it would help to know how public opinion fit with what was passed for planning. i.e. was it 60/40 for or 90/10. It helps when prioritising your areas of concern.
- Real issues lie elsewhere. Local authorities have too little power and financial resources to create better boroughs. We end up with laudable aims on paper but nightmarish developments on the ground that blight neighbourhoods for decades (Colliers Wood)
- "Real planning in Merton does not exist" – comment by Mark Paterson in letters appearing in the local Guardian newspaper dated 3/2/00 sums up Merton precisely.

- Astonished at the apathy of residents; it is our responsibility to follow local issues, vote for suitable representatives on the Council and take note of proposed changes and developments, before construction begins.
- Ask council planning officers to reply to all letters they receive and to take public opinion seriously and not wait for litigation to arrive before they do something.
- Please include consideration of the human factor. Keep party politics out of township planning. Support the community associations.
- They should make better use of the grass roots infrastructures of the residents associations and eliminate the desire to make politically correct decisions. At present they pretend to consult – or they consult us and do what they want anyway.
- Further communication, and better feedback.
- UDP – never seen it
- Better use of free local paper
- Consult local people more on local projects.
- There are lots of working people who work long hours. The council needs to consider this when scheduling meetings.
- Housing and other things are at a premium. A better review of the local authorities should be done. Merton doesn't seem to listen to what people say.
- Merton takes no notice of what people say. Merton does nothing with public input.
- Inform public through press. No planning applications in press.
- Streets are not clean. Lots of dumping in backyard.
- More advertising should be done
- Contact more – use libraries, papers, vacant lots. More planning permission notices should be posted. Lots of co-operation from the planning department is needed.
- They need to publicise the minutes better because even though they are in the library, they are not always easily accessible.
- More consultation should be done
- I am very sceptical on public consultation. I think they are required by law, but Merton seems to do the very minimum.
- Merton is too worried about economics. Merton needs to know the people's needs.
- Advertisement is necessary so everybody is informed.
- More organised meetings at college with councillors.

Appendix I

Best Value Recommendations from Respondents

Creating Fair Access in Planning and Consultations

1. Authorities should consider how accessible the service they provide is to different groups in the population such as ethnic minorities, religious groups, elderly and disabled people and disadvantaged and deprived people in inner urban areas

(DETR, Best, 82).

- 87% of the respondents rated Merton Council as average or below average in their efforts to obtain minority opinions.

Suggestions from Respondents on how to improve accessibility:

- Publish minutes from meetings in local paper so everyone can read them (Appendix H, 91).
- First conduct an analysis of the minority groups to determine which are underrepresented in the area. Then have a random sample from each to hold a discussion group and ascertain their needs (Appendix H, 91).
- When addressing a particular ethnic group or disability group, all documents or direct communication should be provided in the consultant's given language (Appendix H, 91).
- In areas of Merton where groups may be less organised, councillors should ensure consultation takes place at local meetings (Appendix H, 92).
- Merton should hold more regularly scheduled focus meetings (Appendix H, 89).

Quality of Planning Services

1. *BV111: Percentage of applicants and those commenting on planning applications satisfied with the service received (DETR, Performance, 15).*
 - 59% of the respondents wrote that the Council did not take account of their views after acquiring them through the survey.

Recommendations from respondents on methods to inform residents after consultations:

- The feedback is less effective than the consultation. Ensure that decisions are properly explained through leaflets (Appendix H, 89).
 - Posted leaflets should indicate areas where council changed its views as a consequence of the public consultation (Appendix H, 95).
 - Email postings are ideal for receiving information from the Council (Appendix H, 95).
 - Developing proposals after councillors discuss issues with local groups (Appendix H, 88).
 - When the residents approach the planning department actions are effectively taken on the residents views. Residents suggest having more open office hours in the planning department (Appendix H, 88).
2. *BV3: The percentage of citizens satisfied with the overall service provided by their authority (DETR, Performance, 15).*

- 83% of the participants rated the Council average to below average when asked how well the Council informed them on planning issues.

Recommendations to improve overall satisfaction with services:

- Publicise meetings in both libraries and Merton Messenger. Provide facilities to obtain copies of agendas before the meeting (Appendix H, 97).
- More time should be allowed for resident responses on consultations and planning issues(Appendix H, 100).
- Merton should make better use of local newspaper, including a section that highlights the important changes (Appendix H, 89).
- Members should have a “right to reply” at public meetings. Currently members of the community have only one 3- minute “slot” to raise points and ask questions (Appendix H, 96).
- Chairman of Planning Committee should have a limited term of office (Appendix H, 96).
- Civic Centre/libraries should have planning information forms for people to read and sign, so Council and residents have better idea of who is concerned about planning issues (Appendix H, 96).

3. *BV 118: The percentage of library users who found the books they wanted and/or the information they needed (DETR, Performance, 15).*

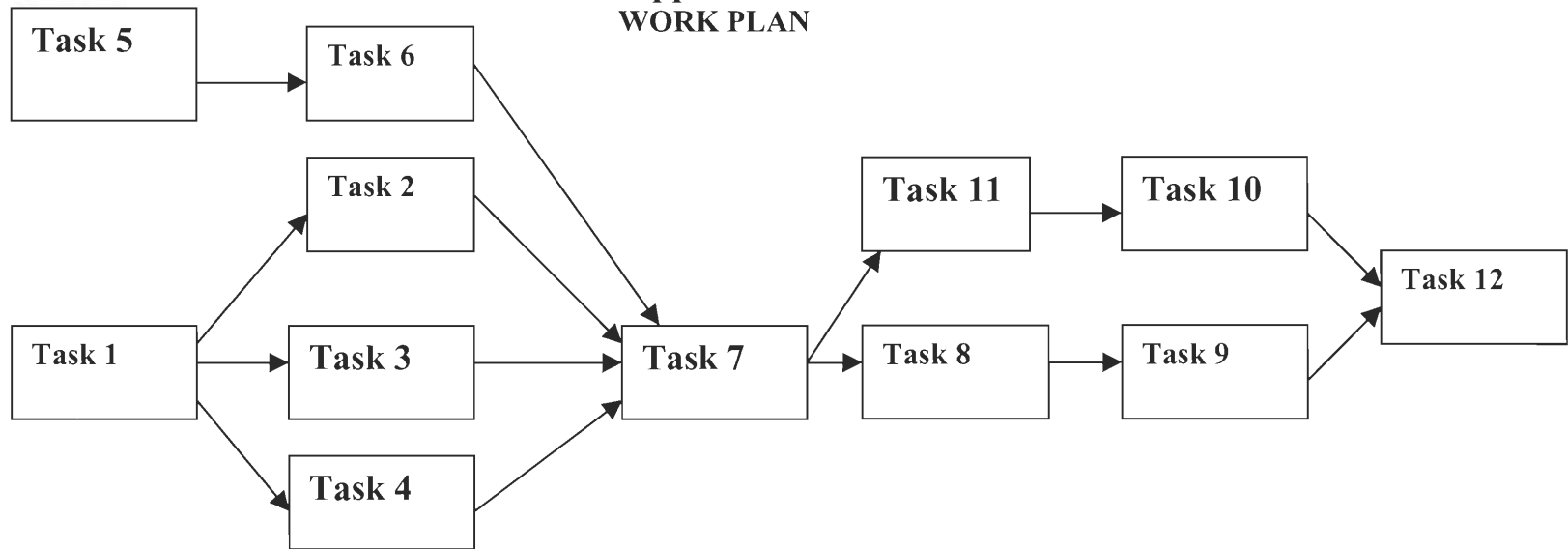
- 71% of the respondents felt that feedback on the survey was not easily obtainable.

Recommendations to improve information in libraries:

- The information often displayed in the library or Centre Court is not always clear (Appendix H, 84).
- The library only had three copies of the UDP Deposit Draft and they were always out on loan. More copies and a summary would help citizens to be more informed (Appendix H, 95).

- The Council should give greater incentives for developers to organise local public meetings. This would give residents explanations and a chance to have developers listen to residents (Appendix H, 98).

Appendix J WORK PLAN



Task 1- Write and send postcards telling the selected residents that they will be receiving a survey.

Task 2- Write our survey and pre-test it on our liaison.

Task 3- Focus group to pre-test our survey.

Task 4- Write final draft of our survey and post it.

Task 5- Background Research on Best Value.

Task 6- Interview for Best Value understanding.

Task 7- Data Entry of survey results, and preliminary analysis

Task 8- Phone Interviews

Task 9- Integration of phone interviews with postal survey information, extensive analysis of results

Task 10- Write report.

Task 11- Prepare recommendations for future consultation and feedback practices

Task 12- Prepare and present final presentation.

Week 0	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
Week Before Arrival							



Appendix K

Contact Information

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Appendix L

Glossary

Best Value: government legislation to ensure high quality local government services.

CCT: Compulsory Competitive Tendering, established in 1979 as a government planning policy that focused on competition as a method to increase and improve public services to the community.

Consultation: method of obtaining public opinion.

Focus group: interview with multiple people simultaneously.

Pretest: method to determine weaknesses in questions to remove flaws that could lead to biases.

Simple random sampling: sampling method in which all members of census have an equal probability of being selected.

Snowball sampling method: method to obtain new contacts through references given by members of sample.

Sustainable Development: meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

UDP: Unitary Development Plan. 10 year plan to guide changes in the borough's physical environment and infrastructure to meet the needs of the residents.